

Leg: The Story of a Limb and the Boy Who Grew from It

Greg Marshall

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Greg Marshall's moving memoir *Leg* is about finding strength in family support.

While applying for health insurance during graduate school, Marshall learned that his recognizable limp was a symptom of spastic cerebral palsy. He'd endured years of surgeries and physical therapy to lengthen his leg, which his mother had told him was the result of "tight tendons." Shaken by the new revelation, he called his mother (who was in the perpetual process of contending with cancer herself) to ask why she'd chosen to lie to him for years. She told him that she didn't believe in labels.

As it ponders the question of whether knowing the truth about his limp early on would have made a difference in Marshall's life, the book also reveals how stigmas around living with disabilities have evolved in tandem with hopeful medical strides. It is marked by humor; family bonds form its inspirational core. Powered by his father's encouragement to "never, never, never give up," Marshall wore holes in the tops of his tennis shoes; tried his best to hide his limp and stiff leg; ran on the treadmill; and took tennis lessons. He looked up to his "marathon man" father, who survived breaking his neck while cliff diving, owned several local magazines, and contended with Lou Gehrig's disease. Their father-son relationship saw them through Marshall's teenage snarkiness and a charming trip to Paris.

Marshall's memories are marked by joy and heartbreak too: in time, he became his father's caregiver. He took the position with occasional reluctance, though always remembering to ask for reminders that he was his father's favorite when they said goodbye.

Leg is a powerful memoir about overcoming obstacles with one's sense of humor intact.

ERIN NESBIT (May / June 2023)

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