

Rising Above

Bruno DeLuca

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Those who like real-life inspirational stories will enjoy this passionate take on father-son relationships.

Bruno DeLuca's powerful memoir *Rising Above* passionately details his childhood in the 1960s, with the tumultuous relationship between DeLuca and his father as the focal point. It is a slim but earnest book.

DeLuca candidly writes of his life as the eldest child in an Italian family that worked long, hard hours to be successful in their own bakery businesses. In an authentic and sincere voice, he lovingly and realistically portrays growing up a first-generation Canadian in a household where the father was very demanding and harsh, even taking advantage of his young adult sons when they went into their first business venture together. This memoir is an attempt to address resultant negative feelings, while also promoting healthier and more positive responses to life events.

A strong and personable narrator, DeLuca is a storyteller who uses detail to captivate. As a boy, he foretold his sister Nina's birth; his brother Rocco cried nonstop as an infant, driving their mother to illness; he visited his grandfather—his *nonno*—who lay dying in Italy in a hospital room next to a gangster shot eighteen times. It's these little details, warts and all, that entice and intrigue.

Rhetorical questions are interspersed throughout as DeLuca speaks one-on-one with his audience, explaining and expounding. DeLuca is philosophical when he opines, "You know the old saying the truth will set you free? It is true, but be true to yourself." It's a lesson he believes he has learned the hard way, and it was made even more difficult because of family involvement.

Watching his parents' relationship falter when he was a senior in high school is his explanation for why he was always gun-shy on marriage, although he writes that his eventual courtship of and marriage to the feisty Jojo turns things around for him. That his Catholic religion is important to him is evident in the biblical quotes opening eighteen of the chapters, as well as some of the life-affirming conversations within.

A nice touch is the honor he pays to other bakery business personnel as he acknowledges their venues and the community they are all a part of. His words of business wisdom are gleaned from more than forty years of working in the baking industry in some capacity.

There are occasional missing words, missing quotation marks, and run-on sentences, as well as an unexplained acronym that causes confusion, but these are minor distractions.

Those who like real-life inspirational stories will enjoy this passionate take on father-son relationships. DeLuca offers a bit of final advice that he has accepted for himself: "There is nothing that I could ever do to change him, but I can change me."

ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (August 1, 2017)

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