

# KIRKUS REVIEWS

## BOOK REVIEW

A thousand comic anecdotes illuminate an ordinary life in this genial memoir.

Debut author Karp, born in Brooklyn and now retired in Boca Raton, Florida, uses the bare bones of his upbringing, two marriages, and careers in the garment industry, real estate, and insurance as a framework for his stories about assorted misadventures. Episodes include youthful hijinks in his family's Brighton Beach apartment building ("many complaints came to my mother about her juvenile delinquent son flooding the basement with soapsuds"); pratfalls in the Army Reserve (caught tanning himself with a reflecting sheet, the author was accused of flashing signals to Russian submarines); parenting tasks ("I took my drunk seven-year-old daughter home and certainly never told her mother"); a workplace Heimlich maneuver ("A two-pound wedge of rare roast beef came flying out of his mouth and bounced along the floor like a hockey puck"); and romantic exploits as a rare and sought-after widower on the torrid Boca seniors dating scene ("We certainly did not agree on political philosophy, and when she asked me about a second date, I told her that I would be vacationing in North Korea.") Famous faces make cameo appearances—pop singer Neil Sedaka, a boyhood friend; candidate Barack Obama, who shook Karp's hand at a campaign rally; movie star Rex Harrison, whom Karp spied being carried out of a Madrid restaurant dead drunk. Most of the vignettes are wryly humorous, but some have darker edges ("When they saw me, they stopped fighting, and when I realized that the man on top had a gun in his back pocket, I jumped back in the car"), while others, like a scene of the author corralling strolling musicians to serenade his wife, are tender and wistful. There's not a lot of rumination in this album of breezy, cheerful, random snapshots, but together they add up to a vivid, warmhearted portrait of postwar Jewish-American life, full of hope and laughter.

An endearingly picaresque set of family memories.

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