

Reader Views

Book reviews, for readers, by readers.

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He Said, She Said

Ken Klarfeld & Jasmyn Klarfeld

iUniverse (2005)

Reviewed by Beverly Pechin for Reader Views (3/06)

This is not another "How to Raise Your Kids" Instruction Book, written by those who have no children but all the knowledge of raising them because they read about it in some text book. I tire easily of those with degrees in child rearing who have never experienced the actual thing first hand, so my expectations when first looking at this type of book weren't that high. I figured *Great, another know it all doctor who is going to tell you how to raise your kids*; instead I began reading a true parent's ordeal with raising a daughter who began her life well-adjusted and nearly 'perfect' only to find nothing but a troubled life ahead.

The book is written in two perspectives, the father's and then the daughter's. Each chapter deals with a new step in the daughter's life as she grows but from the very beginning you see how quickly the adult's version of what happened differs from the child's. It gives you a whole new insight to what it's like growing up in a broken/mixed family. In what seems to be today's "norm" of divorce and step-parents. While everything seemed perfect from the parent's stand-point, the child tells her views on how she felt during these times. She shows aspects of how everyday life isn't so every day when you're a child. What I loved most was, this young lady was not a troubled child. She was every parent's dream in the beginning. She excelled in her studies, had good solid friendships and was raised in a loving atmosphere. Somehow, she still took a wrong turn and the insight this book provides helps you see where those turns were. It's like child-rearing 101, but with hindsight. From a parent's perspective, it's what we all wish we had known before hand.

Ken was a divorced father of two young children. He was in a relationship with a woman who was a drug abuser and for obvious reasons decided to remove himself and his children from the situation. He knew from the beginning that the relationship wasn't good anyways, they fought constantly and he was never really happy but, like so many, thought kids would help solve the problem. Instead, the obvious happened and Ken found himself a single dad raising a son and a daughter.

Ken quickly found another love and remarried fairly soon after the divorce. His kids were still young, often a time when many single parents think it's best to begin a blended family because "the kids are young and it's just like a new family anyways". What we

find by reading this book is that this is often not the case. Jasmyn, his oldest daughter, often expresses how hard it was for her as the child to belong to 2 mothers. She also expresses that she often felt like she was not her step-mother's but she was her father's, often creating turmoil within herself with these thoughts. Whether her parent's felt this way or not was of no bearing, what mattered is how her own mind adjusted to living in what we today call a "mixed family". It wasn't obvious until somewhat later, after her baby years that this mindset took place and the problems began.

The book follows the life of a young girl who never seems to find happiness and parents (step-parents) who can't seem to do enough to "*help*" but perhaps help too much. Again, the hindsight is that they should have allowed her to make choices, come to them for help before they simply bailed her out. Loosing life's lessons, this young seemingly perfect girl made all the wrong turns and became every parent's nightmare. The book shows each turning point and stage of Jasmyn's life and how both she and her father viewed it; often two completely different outtakes. We watch her twist and turn, taking wrong road after wrong road and as parent's look and say "*well, I probably would have done the same thing*" and THAT is where the purpose of the book comes in.

To sum it up, the book is a true account of a young girl growing up with wrong decisions. Growing up in what we would consider a perfect, loving family but we find what seems good on the outside, isn't always good inside. We get to look back on this family's life and have hindsight to raising a young, troubled teen. We get to see that even the most perfect of children can make the wrong choices and we, as parents, can sometimes help in making those choices even when we don't know it. It's a book of truth and honesty without the fear of looking bad. Most amazingly it is a way for both parents and teens to see a true view of growing up and learn from the mistakes of someone else. I think the authors accomplished what they meant to do, give us an understanding of child rearing from a realistic perspective and their ability to admit their own mistakes helps us to see ours before they occur. I would recommend it to anyone even thinking of having children, not to scare them away from this glorious decision but to give them a head start of child rearing with hindsight before they even begin. Teens could benefit from this book simply because they would not only relate to the girls feelings during these times but can see what her decisions did to her life. It's a wonderful life's lesson, summed up in a couple hundred pages; something most of us wish we could do ahead of time and now we finally have the chance to learn from it in another perspective.