

# Many interesting stories are told in biographies

Many of us enjoy reading biographies because delving into the lives of the rich and famous gives us the thrill of seeing the opulence, the naughtiness and the warts of the mighty and renowned.

Do you know that the Milton Public Library stocks dozens and dozens of life histories that not only talk about the rich and famous, but also give insight into the more common lives of the ordinary who have become extraordinary in some way.

An example of this is the series of autobiographies penned by Jill Conway, beginning with 'The Road from Coorain.' How does a poor Australian girl growing up in the outback in the 1930s become a professor at the University of Toronto and then president of the prestigious Smith College in the United States?

Most of us know of 'Angela's Ashes,' but have you encountered Helen Forrester's 'Twopence to Cross the Mersey'?

Forrester's book tells of her sometimes horrific childhood in Liverpool, in which her family goes from a middle class lifestyle to poverty and squalor in the 1930s.

Stories of those who face physical challenges are equally engrossing. 'The Survival of Jan Little' by John Man is the tale of a blind and

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deaf woman who demonstrates incredible human fortitude in overcoming enormous handicaps and abuse, and has parallels to the Helen Keller story.

On a more upbeat note, 'Blackouts to Bright Lights' by Barbara LaDouceur and Phyllis Spence tells the individual stories, many happy, some not, of some of the British war brides who arrived in Canada in the 1940s.

Tough times produced tough women!

Kids might enjoy the obvious 'Biography of a Komodo Dragon' by Alice Hopf, or 'Enrico Fermi' (one of the fathers of the A bomb and a Nobel prize winner) or 'Boy' by Roald Dahl. 'Boy' is in some ways just as silly as some of the books he has written such as 'The BFG,' 'The Twits' or 'Fantastic Mr. Fox,' but is in fact the amazingly true story of his youthful years and his highly unusual family.

For young adults, 'Dragon Hunter' by Roy Chapman Andrews gives an account of his life in archaeology. Many think the fictional Indiana Jones was based on

Chapman's escapades!

Or, with a glass of champagne by your side, why not digest a yummy (or tasteful?) autobiography of a famous Franco-American chef, 'The Apprentice' by Jacques Pepin.

And discover the British side of fine dining, accompanied by the appropriate pint, by reading 'Toast' by Nigel Slater.

For those with a yen for adventure, try 'Without Reservations' by well-known journalist Alice Steinbach, about travels and life adventures throughout Europe.

For others who may like science in their life histories, 'The Quark and the Jaguar' by Murray Gell-Mann is an intriguing read. For science with a rather more creepy tinge, dip into 'Dead Men do Tell Tales,' the autobiography of forensic scientist William Maples.

The library has many, many more extraordinary but true tales of lives well spent or misspent. The staff at the Information Desk will be happy to help you walk a mile in someone else's shoes by finding you a biography or auto-biography to experience.

Cover to cover is prepared by staff at the Milton Public Library.

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