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An American Family: Three Decades With The McGarveys



Synopsis

Book by Cookman, Claude

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Book DescriptionWhether you think of it as the ultimate in time-lapse photography or a reality show begun decades before its time, this 30-year photographic look at one middle-class family from Louisville, Kentucky, is Americana at its most evocative—“at once moving, modest, and quietly magnificent. Conceived in the 20th century and carried forward into the 21st, this remarkable collection peers into every aspect of one particular family’s life to produce an album that is instantly recognizable to anyone who has ever shared the American experience. A gifted photojournalist whose 250 discerning images speak for themselves in eloquent black and white, Pam Spaulding started to record the simple, unscripted “real life” events of the McGarveys immediately after the birth of the couple’s first baby in 1977 and ended with the wedding of the second of their three children in 2007. From the death of a beloved dog to Dad McGarvey struggling to assemble a toy aircraft carrier in the wee hours of Christmas, these are scenes that all of us know yet rediscover with astonishing force. From proud young parents to their kids squabbling in the backseat of the family car to the next generation of newlyweds, it’s all here—love, humor, intimacy, tragedy, loyalty. Look Inside An American Family Click on thumbnails for larger images

Morgan holds hands with his grandfather and “best friend,” Elmer Morgan. August 1986 Judy dresses Sara for her fourth birthday party, which featured a Cinderella theme including a neighbor

playing the fairy godmother. May 1987 David, center, says the Pledge of Allegiance for the first time in kindergarten. Three of his classmates in the picture will stay with him through eighth grade. September 1982 Two decades later, Morgan supports his grand father as they climb the stairs. June 2007 Sara finds her prom dress in one day of shopping with her mother. March 2001 The family welcomes David home from a tour in Iraq. John, who rarely shows emotion, held back tears when the crowd at the airport broke into applause. November 2006

Pam Spaulding has been a photojournalist at the Louisville Courier-Journal for 35 years. She has taught for the National Press Photographers Association. Claude Cookman is an associate professor of journalism at the Indiana University school of journalism. He has been a writer and picture editor for numerous periodicals.

A wonderful pictorial narrative of an American family. Although of everyday life, the pictures manage to touch the viewer profoundly and express emotions that words cannot. Pam Spaulding has captured the true essence of the value of family.

An absolutely amazing journey. Read the articles about individual family members—completely worth your time. It makes me sad that this book is out of print now.

I live in the city where this photographer has worked for more than 30 years and bought the book after seeing a preview in the Courier-Journal. I think everyone will find certain photos that resonate; I loved the photos of young grandparents with their young grandkids, juxtaposed with photos of the same kids as young adults, having transitioned to the role of providing support and encouragement for an elderly relative. Ms. Spaulding captures other moments I could relate to—from the teenager's first time in a new car to the loss of the family pet. And if your Dad every stayed up late assembling your Christmas present, he'll love this book. I do wonder how this family's behavior might have been influenced by having a journalist around to record private moments. If it was, the results seem positive.

My Rating: 4 stars
Brief Summary: Photographer Pam Spaulding spent three decades photographing the McGarvey family from Louisville, Kentucky. Starting in 1977 after the birth of the couple's first baby and continuing until 2007, this book contains a selection of photos from this timeframe—allowing you to literally watch the family grow up before your eyes. Although there is

some text in the book, the majority of the book consists of full-page black and white photos, often with photos from two different decades facing each other. Brief Thoughts: This book was just fascinating, and once I started paging through it, I couldn't stop. It was also interesting to learn how this project grew and developed and to hear from both parties how the relationship grew and evolved.

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