

My Memoirs, To the Best of My Knowledge

by Con Chapman

The tradition of American memoir is a rich and varied one, from Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* to J. Edgar Hoover's *Memoirs of a Cross-Dressing G-Man*. That vein of silver has been tarnished by recent fabrications such as James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces* and "*Misha: A Memoire of the Holocaust Years*," in which the author claimed she was adopted by a pack of wolves during World War II.



Frey: Just kidding.

Now comes "*Goodbye to Most of That*," written by a woman who says she was abducted by aliens from her home in suburban Atlanta, raised by two out of three Pointer Sisters and forced to work for Mary Kay Cosmetics. It's enough to make you question the critical faculties of top New York editors who let these howlers slip by. Everyone knows there are four Pointer Sisters.

Pointer Sisters: Special 4-for-the-price-of-3 sale

In a variation on Gresham's Law, counterfeit tales are crowding out true life stories such as mine, *Barefoot Boy With Pogo Stick*. To stop this disturbing trend, this country needs a self-administered exam, like a home pregnancy test, that could weed out made-up memoirs from the real thing before they hit the bookstores and separate unsuspecting readers from their \$24.95.

What follows is my first crack at such a helpful writer's tool. Use a #2 lead pencil to circle your answers and see if the memoir you've written is true or false!



You were raised by:

- (a) wolves
- (b) penguins
- (c) your future first spouse



The flop, the turn, the river

Complete the following sentence: "I feel most alive when I'm . . ."

- (a) chopping sugar cane with Che Guevara.
- (b) playing Texas Hold 'Em with my fellow geishas.
- (c) telling Ty Cobb to stop picking on the sales help at Talbots.



Ty Cobb: "Do you have any cable-knit cardigans?"

You knew from an early age that you were:

- (a) a man trapped in a woman's body.
- (b) a wolf trapped in a penguin's body.
- (c) a commuter trapped on the 5:15 Framingham train next to a mime talking on a cell phone.

During World War II you were:

- (a) tail-gunner on the Enola Gay
- (b) Eva Braun's electrolosist
- (c) roadie for an all-female gypsy guitar combo

Arena football: It's better in three dimensions!

Your favorite form of self-abuse is:

- (a) taking over-the-counter drugs for coughs and colds.
- (b) drinking frozen smoothies so fast you get brain cramps
- (c) watching Arena Football games through 3-D glasses



"Bigfoot, darling, you've got some housecat fur on your upper lip."

DNA tests prove you are the love child of Audrey Hepburn and:

- (a) Bigfoot
- (b) Wilt Chamberlain
- (c) The Sons of the Pioneers



Pas de deux par dessus tombe jammer

You hit bottom the night you:

- (a) flew into Paris with Lindbergh
- (b) shared a jail cell with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rick James
- (c) mistook Twyla Tharp for Truman Capote at a Bronx Banshees roller derby tryout



Jujubes: Bet you can't eat just one.

After decades of self-destructive behavior, you entered rehab to:

- (a) take a break from the claustrophobic atmosphere of the wolf den

- (b) kick a crippling addiction to jujubes
- (c) meet new people and make new friends



You think the world would be a better place if we:

- (a) learned to tolerate the personal grooming habits of people raised by wolves.
- (b) resolved international conflicts by playing Twister.
- (c) understood that it's not enough to win an Ultimate Fighting Championship if you can't find true love.



"We have fun here, but there's a serious side to death, too."

You turned your life around when you realized that:

- (a) life is for the living, unless you're a funeral director.
- (b) don't sweat the small stuff, unless the small stuff is a fatal virus.
- (c) if you hold an empty gin bottle under hot running water, you can make it secrete another half shot.

Score three points for each "a", five for each "b" and seven for each "c".

If your score is 28 or less, you have an unfortunate penchant for the truth, and should stick to certified public accounting. If your score is at least 29 but not more than 37 with less than two minutes to play, foul the man who catches the inbounds pass and hope he misses the front end of the one-and-one. If your score is greater than 37, your memoir is ready for publication as either fiction or non-fiction, whichever comes first.

Oprah's people want to talk to you—ask one of your personalities to give them a call.

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