



Brooklyn NY: A Grim Retrospective: A Memoir

Jerry Castaldo , Chip Deffaa (Editor)

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This explosive autobiographical volume is about entertainer Jerry Castaldo growing up on the mean streets of Brooklyn, NY, his agonizing descent into the darkness of the city's underbelly and his desperate struggle back to normalcy. Celebrated NY Post columnist, author and playwright Chip Deffaa edited this dark, yet inspirational story. "Heartbreaking," "surprising," "emotionally charged." "Shocking," "volatile," "riveting" and "just plain scary." Those comments are from readers of this book who cut a wide swath across a varied demographic--men, women; young, old; and who are from varying socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and locales. Michael Musto, award-winning columnist for The Village Voice in NYC and TV's "E! Channel" regular calls it: A gritty tale of dark struggle!" America's largest Italian American newspaper promises: "You'll be captured by his story from the very first page!" Jerry Seinfeld, sitcom star and comedian says, "I'm tellin' you right now--this guy is gonna be the biggest thing in show business."

Brooklyn NY: A Grim Retrospective: A Memoir Details

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From Reader Review Brooklyn NY: A Grim Retrospective: A Memoir for online ebook

Cathy Brockman says

This book is a real eyeopener. It goes to show just what can be accomplished with hard work and determination. It also shows that you do not have to be born rich and famous to get ahead but have drive and determination. That no matter how many times you may fail, or fall back into your old habits, if you really want to move forward you can. Jerry shares his life of struggle, drugs, theft and other habits, and his determination to keep coming back up no matter how many times you dealt a bad blow!! Thanks for sharing your story!! I am sure it will touch many for years to come. Great book, but be warned, you will laugh and cry and sit on the edge of your seat. I bit many a nail to the quick while reading!!

K.F. Ridley says

I can't believe that he lived to tell the tale. Castaldo's story of struggle and triumph should be a movie. I never thought a memoir could be a page turner, but this story makes you want to read more after every chapter. For those who have struggled in life with addiction and bad breaks, Castaldo's story will give you hope. Hope that things can change. Hope that there is a better tomorrow

Thomas says

I've never met Jerry Castaldo, but he took me on a riotous ride through the dark, mean streets of Brooklyn, luxury apartments in Manhattan and mahogany yachts in Ft. Lauderdale.

He introduced me to neighborhood thugs, Mafia hoods, and luminous celebrities as we traveled. I watched him reach the pinnacles of joy and achievement and lamented his falls into swamps of wretched despair.

His book: Brooklyn, NY: A Grim Retrospective engages readers on several levels. It compels readers to continue turning pages. The blunt prose and unadorned narrative speak the truth of someone who lived a life of filled with dreams and pain.

Readers will come to celebrate Jerry's successes with a sense of foreboding, dreading the next harrowing descent into misery, but always with hope.

The book tells the story of a man's journey from hopelessness to redemption. Highly recommended.

Anthony says

The idea of a Bronx native like me reviewing a book about a man's growing-up process in Brooklyn at first seemed odd. Brooklyn, for the most part, was always the place I would occasionally visit to meet a friend, or pick up a Match.com chick, or attend certain events. But having met the author, Jerry Castaldo, during the internet radio show I co-host, and greatly enjoying his company, candor and fun demeanor, I certainly was willing to take on the assignment.

After reading through the first few chapters, I knew that this was an assignment I'd truly enjoy. Jerry brings his experiences to the reader in unique form. His story is compelling, witty and reflective, but with a suitable dose of gritty, Brooklyn-ese lingo and descriptive scenery that will effectively cast you into the bars, alleys, and streets in which he made his name known. His chance encounters with local history, such as being present at and seeing his friends cast in the filming of Saturday Night Fever, will give the reader a perspective shared by only a collective of residents in this borough.

The neighborhoods and local landmarks Jerry describes [even the site of one of the Son of Sam murders] had me invoking Google Maps to chart the adventures and ride along with of this brazen yet charming ruffian and car enthusiast. A cultural touch is added to each chapter, as Jerry recounts the song which topped the charts during each of his personal episodes. And as music often is the soundtrack to our lives, it is sometimes the case here as well!

The most compelling aspect of the story is the saga of the protagonist himself. And even the author would agree, perhaps that term applies for only half the book. As you read through, your emotions are in see-saw mode, as you alternate, first in praise of and then utterly disgusted with the life decisions of a younger, haphazard Jerry. All throughout, his successes with Andrew Stein, Revlon, overseas military and the Friars (see, you'll have to read this!) are countered with the most basic of human failures and personal demons. Although I found Jerry's final "turnaround" to be less than climactic, my heart was relieved to see he escaped unharmed.

Reading this as a New Yorker is almost sentimental. We city natives assuredly all knew of (or perhaps were!) a character whose life was full of jaw-dropping, laugh-inducing adventures. Unfortunately few, if any, of them could condense it into the spinning of such a fun tale. Mr. Castaldo has accomplished this indeed!

As for you non-New Yorkers and rural dwellers, these 211 pages just might give you a chance to read about the kind of insanity you might be thankful you didn't have to suffer through... Or is it perhaps the life you might wish you could've tasted? I don't know. Jerry does, though. And you'll just have to figure it out for yourself and take the ride too!

As an old 1960's drama claimed, "There are eight million stories in the naked city. And this has been one of them". And a damn good one indeed!

Ellen Maze says

Giro "Jerry" Castaldo is real, and this memoir chilling. Covering more than twenty years, this amazing story will touch your deepest inward parts and stick with you forever. Without holding any punches, the author allows us an exclusive peek not only into his past, but also into his heart and spirit. Yes, the streets were

mean, and Jerry's activities feckless, to put it lightly, but while I read this memoir, I saw so much more. I saw hope, love, and a desperate desire to be good; to return to the "altar boy" existence he had before puberty. Oh! I could have strangled him as his addiction caused him one missed opportunity after another! When he finally fell to the lowest point, he finally allows healing to being through an AA encounter. Thank God Jerry hung on and lived long enough to see sobriety---and the wonderful and happy life he has today. 5 Huge Stars for the best memoir I have ever read!

Ellen C. Maze

Author of Curiously Spiritual Vampire Tales

Including "Rabbit: Chasing Beth Rider", Customer-Rated #1 in Horror on Amazon

tags: memoir, new york city, manhattan, aa, organized crime, italian, bronx

The Rainbow Zebra says

In Jerry Castaldo's memoir, Brooklyn NY: A Grim Retrospective, we are taken through the years of his youth and young adulthood. Filled with crime, dealings with gangs and the mob, and forays into heavy drug and alcohol use, you wonder how Castaldo come out of it alive. He very nearly didn't--several times.

Each chapter, complete with the year and number one song of that year, chronicles his meager start, growing up with a single mom, brother and absentee father. His mentors, like "Uncle Tony" introduced him to the life of crime which earned him a nickname of "Jerry the Hammer." A high school dropout, Castaldo made it through life the way those around him did--stealing, selling drugs, taking odd jobs.

This, no doubt, earns the book the "Grim" moniker, and yet, something inside Castaldo urged him to become better, to do better, and to find a way to become a performer no matter what it took.

"Hope is my favorite word. It's all encompassing and it's the one that I always held onto despite my multitude of failures; there was still hope for me."~~Jerry Castaldo, age 22.

This is the feeling I had while reading A Grim Retrospective--hope. While I would read of Castaldo's failures with a heavy heart, I wanted to reach through the pages and tell him, don't give up, keep trying, never lose hope.

Overall, this was a fascinating, albeit dark memoir of a person not at all different from any of us. How many people, given these situations, would still be in one piece, or even alive? For this, Jerry Castaldo has my respect. I didn't see him as a criminal, or drug addict--but a human being, a decent one, who got in a bad place with very few resources to give him a life preserver to cling to.

I especially enjoyed the way the book is presented--putting the year and #1 song really brought a connection, even with 11 years in age difference. In addition, I feel as though I am sitting with Castaldo, while he casually tells the stories of his life. This conversational, personal feel truly draws you into caring about him, cheering him on.

While parts of the book seem a bit less fleshed-out, I attribute that to his introduction, and his promise that

unlike some recent memoirs that were found to be false, his is true and "what is allowed by law to be published without me being prosecuted." If that doesn't give you shivers, you're a tougher reader than I.

This would make a fantastic movie if done right; until then, get a hold of this book and find out just how much hope can make a difference in a life.

Note--A copy of this book was sent to me by the author for this review. Disclosure provided per FTC guidelines. My review is my honest and unbiased opinion.

Maria says

This book is a definite page turner. Jerry Castaldo has taken a brave step as a performing artist to reveal certain truths about his background which some people may find repulsive. He states in the introduction to the book that he had been warned by various people that maybe it would be better if he didn't publish the book, but he has gone ahead and published this autobiography.

I must admit that as I live in the UK, I had never heard of Jerry Castaldo, so none of the revelations were particularly shocking to me as I don't know him as an entertainer. But as he has been 'clean' i.e. not using drugs, for 20 years, I am sure much of the content in the book will probably shock his fans.

In this book, Jerry Castaldo tells us about his upbringing in a rough area of Brooklyn, New York. He was involved in various crimes, some violent. He had an addiction to alcohol and drugs. His life seemed to go through periods when everything would be fine, but then his addiction would rear its head and ruin it all for him, and affect the lives of the people around him.

Jerry made many positive changes in his life along the way trying to beat his addiction, but up until his early thirties the addiction would always win. It was a constant battle. I am sure that there are many people today who are going through the things that Jerry went through, drug abuse and alcohol abuse are problems that are rife in our society, so I am sure that this book could help people if it got into the right hands.

The book covers his suicide attempts, brushes with the law, rehab, his time in the US Army. It's an honest and compelling read.

The author's aim in publishing this book seems to be to imbue some hope in people who are suffering from addictions of any kind. He seems to be reaching out to people as a survivor, and as living proof that although there may always be scars, there is definitely a way out from any dire circumstance.

Fran says

Brooklyn N.Y: A Grim Retrospective

Growing up is not easy when you are impressionable, trying to fit in and not really focused on doing the right thing. Living in an environment that breeds the wrong type of behavior author, singer and writer Jerry Castaldo tells a gripping and compelling story from the start of his life starting at age 16 going downhill from stealing, hammering someone on the head, getting hammered himself and living life large as they say it before realizing that a change was needed and much more. Fitting in does not mean joining in. From stealing cars, to drinking to helping out a friend in time of need you won't believe to what lengths Jerry would go to help someone out, get himself in hot water and make sure he took care of his mom.

From the beginning he seemed to be born under the star of the wrong side of the tracks. Friends calling upon

him to steal radial tires but instead using his new car then finding himself riding with a friend who starts a verbal argument with guys in another car the end result is he winds up in the hospital and never knows what really happened to the other guy he ran over with his car. Bold, daring, taking chances everyday of his life but deep down just trying to find a place for himself Jerry Castaldo's story is gripping, compelling,

From remembering his Dad was not always there for him to learning how to take care of himself Jerry managed to stay in trouble for most of his teen years. Stolen cars, well in his case he just borrowed them for a while to get the driving bugs out of his system. Reading about how his mom stood on line waiting to get food stamps reminded me of the many times I had to fill out the forms for my mom for the same thing. Wrong documentation, incomplete information, people in positions they thought were of power and could lord it over the rest of us. Not in my case because I learned to fight back but back when Jerry's mom stood on line for three hours and was turned away by some rude worker, she had no choice but to leave. No one deserves that kind of treatment.

Many people, even today, make the mistake of leaving their keys in the ignition of their cars thinking they can go and get something from a deli or candy store leaving the car on for just a minute. That is all it takes for someone go open the door, climb in and take it away. Just as Jerry was about to get into a car would you believe he fun was foiled as his mother and her boyfriend were driving by wondering just what he was up to. But, things would still go on a downward spiral as he was picked up by someone called the Boss for stealing his car, got stopped by the same man to pay back what he would call what he stole but in spades and if Jerry continued on he might not make it past 17. Recounting in vivid detail the neighbor he lived in the crimes committed the excitement over having Saturday Night Fever filmed where he lived and the understanding that if he did not make some life changes he might wind up in prison or worse. Family members getting stabbed, visiting a cousin in the hospital and getting caught smoking a joint, Jerry took life as one big risk and never looked back but not before he had one night with one Amazon that he would never forget.

Taking this journey along with the author and the reviewer many kids today will learn the hard lessons that he did back then, as he is now age 20 and needing stitches on his face. But, the night was not over and one girl named Nilda would make it more interesting to say the least as she chased him with a knife, assumed she was his girl and yet when he knew that she was in trouble he came to the rescue.

Next stop the army where his first bit of encouragement came from one Sergeant who recognized his talent. From basic training to Germany where he would learn many more life lessons. Working out, working hard and getting a great job should have changed him. But, did it. Going to Paris and running away from Germany because he kept getting into trouble and could not find one place for himself. Always searching and reaching for a new start in life, yet never really finding one. But, his nightmare had just begun as he had more trouble with the police, the MP's and wound up committed.

Working on Wall Street and finally in a club called Pips Jerry's life began to turn around ad Andrew Dice Clay introduced him and things started to look up. Working with Anne Rebold he entered a contest singing Mack the Knife by Bobby Darin and won. But, that did not stop he reign of wrong doings as he stole a car, total Anne's car wound up in rehab and still did not get it straight.

Jerry finally got a job as a personal trainer and really enjoyed helping people lose weight. One phone call would really rock his world in the right direction as someone called and the receptionist handed him the phone and the person on the other end agreed to his price and wait until you find out who he was going to train: many celebrities. Andrew Stein became his client and from there let's hope it is an upward spiral staircase for Jerry. But, life still had its twists and one woman named Shelly Malone would show him the high life but Jerry would soon learn the hard facts of life. Warned to be careful by his own mother and

remembering his station in life, he slowly fell back into his old pattern and what happens did not endear him even to himself. But, Jerry Seinfeld would turn things around for him when he walked into the health club where he was teaching. Things would change for him and then Shelly reentered his life but Jerry learned the true meaning of betrayal, lies and deceit and then had to decide where his life was going.

Jerry brings to light in this compelling and introspective memoir many important lessons so many young men need to learn today. Friendships change, opportunities are not always what they seem headstrong does not work but having faith in yourself will help you to prevail. Through it all you can hear his inner voice, his thoughts, feel his frustrations, fears and stand up and applaud every time he succeeds as Jerry Castaldo did not give up on life just look at where he is today.

How this all turned out and what lessons he learned you need to read for yourself at the close of the memoir. Life is not easy and learning from your mistakes as he did even harder. Although he is a success in his own right Jerry knows that he still needs to protect himself from his past and never revert back to what he was before. Sober for 20 years is a great accomplishment and knowing that his family, his friends and those that care about him support him, have faith in him, that includes me this reviewer, I know that his spiral climb to fame will never be downward again. This is one memoir that everyone should read and embrace what he is saying and more important Jerry: you have so much to offer and you do have a heart of gold, parents that care and so much talent that I am glad you never lost sight of who you really are and want to be. One compelling memoir. One great singer: I listened to interviews on Utube and heard him sing my favorite song My Way. You are truly amazing. Turning your life around was really the first day of your amazing life and career. Stand Proud!

THIS BOOK GETS FIVE STANDING OVATIONS

Fran Lewis: reviewer

Keith Killoran says

Jerry does a great job of assembling his memoirs in an easy to digest format - 2-3 paragraph summaries about his battles with addiction and growing up in a tough New York neighborhood. There is not a great deal of depth here or character development - many secondary characters come and go within a few pages never to be heard from again. Perhaps this was intentional. Without giving away the ending, my only real criticism would be that the past 20 years of his story is whittled down to just a couple of pages; it almost felt like an "afterthought". Other than that it was a nice quick read.

M.lloyd says

This book is INCREDIBLE, a no-holds barred rocket ride into a young, disturbed life torn apart by addiction and a soul-deep fight to break free and become the good person Jerry had always been, a worthwhile human being : This is a life enhancing, soul-enriching and ultimately life affirming journey, one mans titanic struggle against drug addiction, unlike most books of the genre this is a genuine Page Turner, and frankly a Page Burner, you will tear through the book so quick it will make you dizzy,effortlessly entertaining, engrossing and horrifying but always told from the perspective of a man with great heart & inner-strength bent to breaking point, a man who took a wrong turn in life and fought desperately to get back on track, this book is like having a blockbuster movie play out in your head, truly cinematic experience you wont ever

allow yourself to forget, a blistering in-your-face whirlwind ride with the whole spectrum of human emotions driving the reader on towards the climactic battle;an Astonishing Debut book and an Amazon.com Bestseller sensation!, hundreds of FIVE STAR Reviews and recommended by people from all walks of life from the ordinary joe in the street to celebrities and many, many more, UNputdownable and UNforgettable. A Masterpiece. 10/10 !

Ellen Maze says

Giro "Jerry" Castaldo is real, and this memoir chilling. Covering more than twenty years, this amazing story will touch your deepest inward parts and stick with you forever. Without holding any punches, the author allows us an exclusive peek not only into his past, but also into his heart and spirit. Yes, the streets were mean, and Jerry's activities feckless, to put it lightly, but while I read this memoir, I saw so much more. I saw hope, love, and a desperate desire to be good; to return to the "altar boy" existence he had before puberty. Oh! I could have strangled him as his addiction caused him one missed opportunity after another! When he finally fell to the lowest point, he finally allows healing to being through an AA encounter. Thank God Jerry hung on and lived long enough to see sobriety---and the wonderful and happy life he has today. 5 Huge Stars for the best memoir I have ever read!

Ellen C. Maze

Author of Curiously Spiritual Vampire Tales

Including "Rabbit: Chasing Beth Rider", Customer-Rated #1 in Horror on Amazon

Barbara Watkins says

‘Raw – Emotional – Outstanding’

‘Brooklyn NY: A Grim Retrospective, a memoir by Jerry Castaldo, gives the reader a personal and emotional glimpse into his life growing up in a world of chaos. The reader will follow him on a journey of destruction, drug addiction, violence, and sheer madness, and just when you think he has entered the point of no return – he rises above the darkness.

At sixteen, growing up on the streets of Brooklyn in the 70s, Jerry struggles to survive the next day. Jerry must conform to the rules laid down by those who regulate the streets – a far cry from his alter boy image. Living a life of petty crime while indulging in drugs and alcohol, he loses all self-respect – but at the same time, he never loses the desire and determination to rise up and regain his soul. Through it all, he does not make false excuses for his actions, nor does he lay blame to those who betray his trust.

Jerry will introduce you to celebrities, politicians, royalty, and the underbelly of society. He will prove to you how money and prestige cannot replace the heartache one endures at the mercy of addictions. This memoir is much more than a story of ones fight to overcome adversity, it’s a promise of hope, love and redemption for anyone struggling to break free from addictions of any form. Revealing his most personal tragedies and triumphs, Mr. Castaldo deserves a standing ovation –for if it saves one soul from having to

endure the pain and anguish he suffered – this book is priceless!

Elizabeth says

After getting this book in the mail just a few days ago, I tore into the package like it was Christmas again after reading all of the great reviews. Planning on just reading a few pages, I ended up reading almost to the end on the first day. I just couldn't put this book down. Never at any point did this book lose my interest. Throughout these stories, there was so much despair, but with a bright light at the end of the tunnel. I'm letting EVERYONE know that they have to read this book.

Sharon Martin says

A truly frank and honest account, from the author, in remembering his childhood days and the extremely dark years he plunged into. How he tries to change his life around by joining the army before finding his vocation as a personal trainer moving onto becoming Jerry The Entertainer. Its just shows how anybody can turn their lives around if they truly believe they can.

Jodie says

Jerry's story is certainly an amazing one & it is to his credit that with his many struggles & the difficulties he faced that he did, in fact, never give up. The fact he's still here to make the brave choice to tell his story is remarkable. Jerry's story is both a testament to the tenacious grip addiction can hold as well as the power of grit, determination & perseverance to overcome it & carry on living a better life.
