



I'm Walking as Straight as I Can: Transcending Disability in Hollywood and Beyond

Geri Jewell, Ted Nichelson, Patty Duke (Foreword)

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Born with cerebral palsy, Geri Jewell inspired a generation of young people when she became the first person with a disability to appear in a recurring role on prime-time television, with her groundbreaking character, Cousin Geri, on the NBC sitcom *The Facts of Life*. The book's title -- *I'm Walking As Straight As I Can* -- has a double meaning, referring to both Jewell's sexuality and her extraordinary struggle growing up with cerebral palsy. This candid memoir details her experiences from her traumatic birth in Buffalo, New York, to her rise to stardom as a stand-up comic to becoming a television star. She documents the harsh realities of show business by recounting the relentless discrimination and abuse she suffered at the hands of people she trusted. Her experiences in the shark-infested waters of Hollywood led her on a journey from the Comedy Store to the White House, followed by a downward spiral, tax problems, drug addiction, marriage, and an accident that nearly claimed her life. When *Deadwood* creator David Milch recognized Jewell at a pharmacy, he offered her a role in his new HBO series on the spot, and she began to find hope and happiness once again. *I'm Walking As Straight As I Can* is an inspiring story, told with grace and self-deprecating humor, one that gives readers a rare glimpse of true courage and perseverance.

I'm Walking as Straight as I Can: Transcending Disability in Hollywood and Beyond Details

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Sara Goldenberg says

Wow. What a boo-hoo book.

I didn't like her when she was on Facts of Live, not sure why I ran to read her book.

It's well written but SO self-serving !!!!

Amy says

Very interesting! Some may remember Geri Jewell as Blair Warner's cousin (who had Cerebral Palsey) on the TV show, Facts of Life back in the 80's. This is her story -- it's part talking about her difficulties over the years with finding work in Hollywood (with her disability) and part recounting her troubles with various addictions. She was often taken advantage of because of her disability and yet, she has found a way to pull herself up "by her bootstraps".

TJ says

When I started reading this book, I was struck by the preface from Jewell that thanks attributed Nicholson for keeping her on track throughout the process, and laid it out she herself wrote this, and he guided her to the finish line beautifully. I half expected him to have been a ghost writer of sorts and that was clearly not the case. This book is clearly close to Jewell's heart, with such painful memories told in such a forthright and open minded manner that no ghost writer could ever embrace as his own. It tells of her growth as a person in a touching way, her friends that have been on her journey throughout and the tremendous love and respect they share, the entire journey even when painful to read, is so worth getting to the finish. You get the sense this woman has lived more lives than most any of us, and her kind hearted nature and especially her sharp humor, shine always. I was sort of thinking there would be more about Deadwood, my favorite show, and while there is plenty, its all very positive and maybe that was her experience. I guess we all want the dirt, lol. Her Facts of Life stories are bittersweet and yet her description of the friendship with co-star Lisa Welchel and the bond they share are truly touching, and proof of this woman's ability to see the very best in every situation shine through. I cried (not common for me) when I read of her struggle to come to terms with identity and love herself for herself, made me a little prouder to be a gay man. If she can put it all out there like that, I have nothing to complain about...A MUST READ for anyone interested in the human condition...Write more books Geri, I'll read whatever you want to publish!

Suzen says

There is only so much poor me "I was emotionally immature" and "poor me, I was too trusting" that a person can handle. No one could be that immature and trusting. She hurt too many people in this charade for it to be blamed upon emotional immaturity. It is not possible. I believe she used her disability to her advantage and blamed everyone else for her misfortune. She was perpetually screwing up her life and then had people save her. The book was well written but she is not likable at all. There is nothing inspiring about this book. She is extremely manipulative. But she perpetually blames this on others rather than take the responsibility for her behavior. She is the perpetual "poor cripple". She is an embarrassment to the whole disability rights community. I say this as a person who has lived with disabilities all my life.

I suggest reading Geri that was published in 1984. This has more to do with Geri Jewell and her struggles with CP as a child. She totally glossed over that in this book.

Deb Halberstadt says

Geri Jewell's humor and clear description of life, even without a disability of Cerebral Palsy, is hilarious and heart warming. I know her personally, and yet until reading this book, I had no idea the side of NBC and Facts of Life she experienced as opposed to my experience as an NBC manager.

Dayna Verstegen says

This is no ordinary celebrity autobiography. Geri Jewell cut a special cloth through the entertainment industry. I remember seeing Geri on Facts of Life when I was a kid; she made Blair and all of us better understand the difference between physical and developmental disabilities a bit better.

I so admire Geri's strength and this book was yet another excellent reminder that a person with a disability doesn't need our sympathy, they deserve our respect. The challenges they face are so much greater than what any of us traditionally-abled folks can understand.

This book made me laugh over and over and I have a new-found appreciation for Geri's contribution to our world. Read it. You'll love it.

Pam says

I remember Geri from her days on The Facts of Life tv show from when I was a kid. She was always such an inspiration to me, so when I found out she wrote a book I snapped it up.

I was not disappointed. Hers is a very fascinating, very real story. I really enjoyed this book!

Jeri A Estes says

This is a must read! Geri's personal journey of independence touches the soul and is empowering. Her bold

and honest story of her love affair with a very fickle suitor "show business" is brilliantly depicted.

This is a great Hollywood memoir, it is not a misery memoir filled with self pity and blame. I loved that Geri did not bash her parents nor the religion of her birth.

One of my favorite moments in her book is Geri's encounter with a nun, it begs to be on Saturday night live. It was hysterical!!!

Geri shares with us a wonderful lesson in the power of never giving up. Her personal Renaissance of mind, body and spirit, reminds us all of God's grace. Bravo Geri. Your friend. Jeri Estes
Author, Stilettos and Steel

Richard McMullen says

A wonderful story of overcoming adversity and breaking down barriers. Geri's story is well written, funny and uplifting. Loved it!

Djpolman says

Awesome book! Very interesting life makes for very interesting book ! Thanks geri for sharing it with us.

Joseph says

SHUT UP, BLAIR!

i always loved the fact that blair had a cousin with CP. and i love the fact that she's now an open lesbian and recovering drug addict.

although i do NOT like geri's comedic style (it's a bit unoriginal and stifled), i feel that the book was well written, and contained enough of the "juicy stuff" from her relationship with the girls on the facts of life . . . my dirty little secret.

now . . . if only blair, tootie, jo and natalie wrote their own books . . .

Marie says

Thank you, Geri Jewell for sharing your life's journey (up to now). I love novels based on true stories, with strong female protagonists and I especially love non-fiction memoirs by courageous women, such as yourself. There were many times, as I read your story that I thought to myself, "That is so much like what I went through" and "I love it when strange and magical "coincidences" like that happen." Although I am not disabled, I empathized completely with your struggles as you fought to overcome obstacles related to your having cerebral palsy. On a lighter note, I got a kick out of reading about your experiences with my favs;

Carol Burnette and Lucille Ball. On a very personal level, I could relate to the the roller coaster feelings you went through in your relationships. Lastly, I just have to applaud your parents, your sister and the rest of your family for being so supportive of you. Break a leg (no toes) with your book tour and best of wishes for future successes in Hollywoodland :-)

Ally says

Not going to lie. I read this book for the title, which is possibly the most perfect thing ever conceived. I laughed for ten minutes.

I honestly had no idea who Geri Jewell was. I know of Facts of Life, but I'm too young to have watched it. I read it for my own personal reasons, and loved it. Advice; if you're going to read this book, get the audio book. The author reads it herself, and there are moments where she is actually in tears. This is a fairly personal book for me, for pretty obvious reasons. I spent the first bits nodding the whole way through, and in absolute shock at how little has changed through the entire book. Regardless of my own experiences and the way they colour the story, it is really a good book. Jewell is incredibly honest about her own mistakes, and occasionally far too kind about the way she's been treated. I would pretty much hand this book to anyone who knows me and just leave them alone with it, because I can't possibly say anything you need to know any better.

Melissa Baker says

I love this book! it was a personal journey of a woman not unlike myself who has cerebral palsy lives her life as an openly gay woman. However, you do not have to be GLBT to love this book. Any parent of a child with a disability should read this along with any teenager with a disability to show that there are now role models who share the same struggles we do as well. This would be a great gift to give for the holiday season or any time.

Rev says

This is a great read and a wonderful author. Highly recommended bio!
