

Wayne L. Sanford

Family Services Counselor

Recently, while vacationing, I read the book *God Will Teach Me to Fly* by Joannetta Hendel. For some time I have searched for reading material that addresses the subjects of grief, bereavement, and how individuals deal with adversity. Ms. Hendel suggested her book, saying it might answer several of my questions and concerns. She also added that her book might prove distressing. "Some who read it," she said, "find it difficult and even impossible to complete."

Joannetta's remark about difficult or impossible to read struck me as curious. With her words of warning, I set forth on one of the most extraordinary journeys of my life.

Make no mistake, the content of this book is very personal—as personal as it can get. It is Joannetta's story—a bizarre drama of how she came to grips with adversity, depression, desperation, and fear. I can only surmise that some would consider this work difficult or impossible to read because of the harsh extremes the author had to experience in order to make this book possible. It begins with the sudden death of Joannetta's 2 ½-year-old son. From this point forward she comes face-to-face with every challenge imaginable: Grief, thoughts of suicide, institutionalization, a brutal divorce (which includes a savage custody battle for her four children), counseling sessions with irresponsible therapists, and the sudden realization that her father sexually abused her beginning at a very young age. Add to this the challenge of beginning a new career with virtually no help or encouragement; no financial support, and more road-blocks, one after another. Be advised that these experiences did not arise in an orderly manner. No, they came about collectively, like a tidal wave crashing against a paradise of humanity. And her journey through adversity and fear dragged on for more than a decade.

One must read this book—especially those who are challenged by life's cruel ways. For those who would find it difficult to read, and especially those so consumed by some or all of the ordeals about which Joannetta brings to life I say, do not despair. Feel free to skip to the end and read the final phase. In doing so, the reader will clearly understand that Joannetta Hendel's book is a prophecy of hope and a harbinger of joy. Despite her exposure to more adversity than most people endure in a lifetime, Joannetta's story has the happiest of endings. *God Will Teach Me to Fly* proves to all that out of adversity springs greatness, strength, and the blessing of a better life.

Responding to adversity is a war one wages with himself. Joannetta shares this, boldly and with complete clarity. She speaks candidly, side-stepping nothing. Instead, she addresses each mind numbing situation head-on with total honesty. She exposes her adversity so clearly that the reader cannot help but discover his own challenges and dilemmas. Her willingness to expose the very depths of her soul provides answers to very difficult and personal questions.

I cannot say enough about Joannetta Hendel's book. It is clearly written and reads so well that at times I felt as though I was seated in an audience experiencing a documentary. True, it can be a challenge to read, but if one is so very troubled by the harsh cruelties of life, this personal story can provide a pathway to a new beginning. As Joannetta Hendel says, God can teach us all to fly.