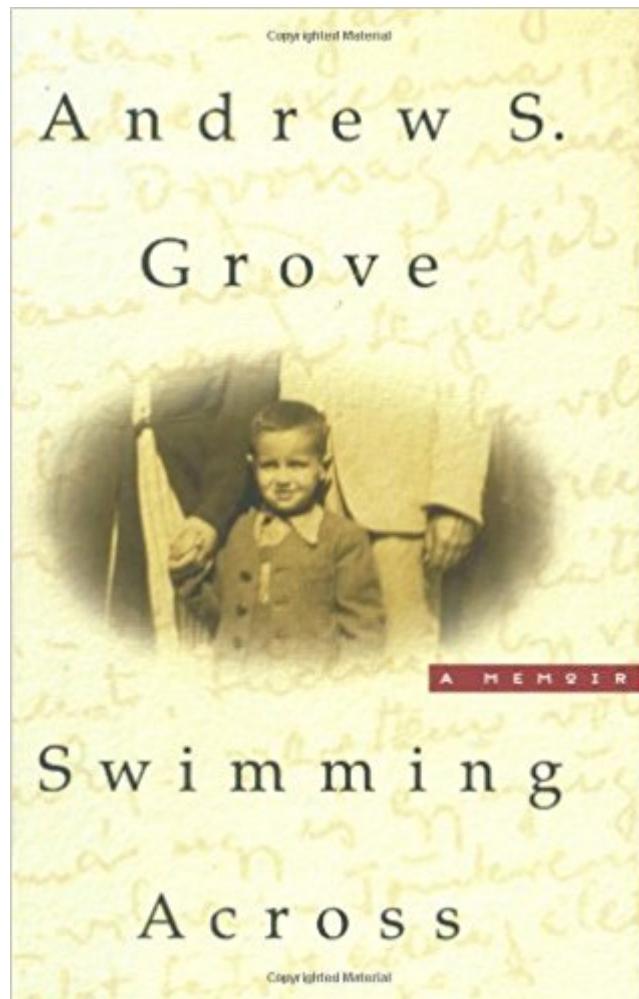


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Swimming Across: A Memoir



Synopsis

Set in the cruel years of Hungary's Nazi occupation and subsequent Communist regime, SWIMMING ACROSS is the stunning childhood memoir of one of the leading thinkers of our time, the legendary Intel chairman. The story of Andris Grof-later to become Andy Grove-begins in the 1930s, on the banks of the Danube. Here, in Budapest, young Andris lives a middle-class existence with his secular Jewish parents. But he and his family will be faced with a host of staggering obstacles. After Andris nearly loses his life to scarlet fever at the age of four, his family is forced to deal with the Nazi occupation of Hungary. Fleeing the Germans, Andris and his mother find refuge with a Christian family in the outskirts of Budapest and then hide in cellars from Russian bombs. After the nightmare of war ends, the family rebuilds its business and its life, only to face a new trial with a succession of repressive Communist governments. In June 1956, the popular Hungarian uprising is put down at gunpoint. Soviet troops occupy Budapest and randomly round up young people. Two hundred thousand Hungarians follow a tortuous route to escape to the West. Among them is the author... Combining a child's sense of wonder with an engineer's passion for detail, Grove re-creates a Europe that has since disappeared. From the Nazis' youthful victims innocently exulting in a "put the Jews in the ghetto" game...to a May Day march through Budapest under the blaring strains of prerecorded cheers...to the almost surreal scenes of young escapees securing the help of a hunchbacked peasant and his fantastically beautiful, colorfully costumed wife, he paints a vivid and suspenseful, personal and cultural portrait. Within these pages, an authentic American hero reveals his origins in a very different place during a very different time. He explores the ways in which persecution and struggle, as well as kinship and courage, shaped his life. It is a story of survival-and triumph.

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Customer Reviews

Andrew Grove has earned fame and fortune as chairman and cofounder of Intel. But, we learn from this remarkable memoir, he began life under very different circumstances, narrowly escaping the Holocaust and the closing of the Iron Curtain. Born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1936, Grove--then called Andras Grof--grew up in a modestly prosperous, secular Jewish family. Through foresight and sheer good fortune, they avoided the fate of many of their fellow Jews, fleeing the Nazis into the countryside and living in a dark cellar in which "the sound of artillery was a continuous backdrop." Under the Communist regime that followed, Grove distinguished himself as a student of chemistry and was seemingly destined for a comfortable position in academia or industry--until revolution broke out in 1956 and he found himself in that cellar once again. How Grove emerged, "swam across" to America, and made a new life under a new name makes a satisfying conclusion to this humane memoir, which gives readers valuable insight into the business guru and technologist.

--Gregory McNamee

"Jesus Christ was killed by the Jews, and because of that, all of the Jews will be thrown into the Danube," says a playmate to four-year-old Andris Grof Grove's original name. Born to a middle-class Jewish family in 1936, Grove, chairman of Intel, grew up in Budapest during his country's most tempestuous era. Despite avoiding deportation and death, Grove's family lived in fear during Nazi occupation and lost some rights and property. Afterwards, they lived under Soviet control. Curiously, Grove's memoir charts the routinized mundanities of his teen years seeing his teacher at the opera, being afraid to meet young women at the local public pool, the success of a short story he wrote more than life in war-torn Europe. But his discussion of contemporary politics is astute and personal "I had mixed feelings about the Communists... they had saved my mother's life and my own.... On the other hand... they increasingly interfered with our daily life." Never didactic, he remains focused on his own intellectual growth. Grove continued his education in New York after the 1956 revolution failed. The intelligence, dedication and ingenuity that earned him fame and fortune (he was Time's Man of the Year in 1997) are evident early on. He deftly balances humor e.g., subversive anti-Communist jokes from Hungary with insight into overcoming endless obstacles (from hostile foreign invasions to New York's City University system). Though lacking in drama, Grove's story stands smartly amid inspirational literature by self-made Americans. B&w photos.

(Nov. 12) Forecast: Warner's fanfare pre-pub bookseller luncheons, Jewish Book Fair appearances, publication events in New York and San Francisco and concerted media campaigns will bring this book to readers' attention despite it not being the sort of business-oriented book most would expect from Grove. Its unexpected subject matter will mean that, despite the Grove name, it won't come near to matching Welch-size sales, but still, it should thrive. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

We all know that Andy Grove ranks among the greats for his leadership of Intel Corp. during the era of its technological and commercial supremacy. And we know that the author of **ONLY THE PARANOID SURVIVE** is an unusually thoughtful and articulate writer. What **SWIMMING ACROSS** reveals is a human being, whose haunting experience of early life can richly inform our understanding of ourselves. The primary setting of this story is Hungary, where Grove was born to a Jewish family and lived until his escape following the revolution of 1956 and its suppression by the U.S.S.R. Inevitably, Grove's life was profoundly, painfully influenced by national and international events, including the Nazi occupation, the death camps, and the Russian occupation. What's extraordinary about this memoir, however, is the discipline with which Grove insists on telling an honest story. His intention, clearly, was to describe the events of his life as he experienced them: the point of view is rigorously real-time. There's no grand historical perspective here, no phony insight from afar, certainly no crass exploitation of the melodramatic potential of the story. Instead, he gives us a boy's life as seen through the eyes of a boy, moment by moment. In that sense, his story is our story. The unique, sometimes charming, sometimes devastating circumstances of this particular life give the story zest and burn. The modesty of Grove's narrative approach, the insistence on capturing experiences as they actually occurred, raise what might have been an ordinary memoir to the level of literature. He gives us the opportunity to recognize ourselves in the young Andris Grof, transmuting a personal story into a universal experience of life. **SWIMMING ACROSS** is a delightfully readable and deeply meaningful tale. I highly recommend it.

Given Andrew's celebrity status, as one of Intel's star CEOs, many readers might come to this book looking for deep insights and life lessons that make for fruitful rags-to-influence story. This book does not deliver on this promise. It is more informative than instructive; more history than personality. It reads like a typical fiction novel, except that it is based on a true story. The book lacks personality. It could have been recorded from the eyes of another kid who went through the same times and hardships as Andrew did and would have read about the same. It also does not speak

anything of Andy's path to success and comes to an abrupt end shortly after Andy's arrival in America and change of name.

Consider this book your antidote for all the recent tales of CEO excess and duplicity. Andy Grove's story of his first 20 years in Hungary and New York City tells us how the events of World War II and the Hungarian Revolution shaped the integrity and inner drive of one man. The story is compelling in its own right. But to read the story of Andras Grof and realize that this boy and his distant childhood turned into Andrew S. Grove...well, it's a journey of unfathomable proportions. To his credit, Grove never oversells the story. He is quite forthright about his role in the Revolution - he was simply a bystander. Fellow Hungarians have read his story and lauded him for his accuracy and honesty. Grove's writing style is sparse and direct. He recalls events with clarity and without extensive interpretation. He gives credit to a couple of editors who helped shape the story, most notably Norman Pearlstine of Time. But this is no ghost-written CEO treatise. These are obviously his words. Some will read "Swimming Across" and conclude that it is a statement about the triumph of the American system. Grove notes near the end of the book "I've continued to be amazed by the fact that as I progressed through school and my career, no one has ever resented my success on account of my being an immigrant." While there's an element of that, I think you'll see it more as a simple but brilliant testament to the Power of One Man. Long live Andy Grove.

A fascinating story that provides good insight into what the Soviet Union was like before it broke apart. Contains the history of WWII from a child's perspective. Shows how excessive government tends to reduce brilliant people to mediocrity. Focuses on the trials of Jews in Hungary and describes how government (and/or crippling anti-semitism) can hold people back. Provides occasional examples of media manipulation.

Thoroughly enjoyed it. The future CEO of Intel really wrote this for his grandchildren; glad he did. The memoir is part of a growing body of literature written by or about the Jewish refugees from 20th century middle Europe. America's gain. The story of his harrowing youth, kept sane by a brave and sensible mother, is told in matter of fact language. All the more powerful.

I was privileged to know Andy when he was CEO of Intel. He was an intense competitor in everything and a gentleman in the process. This is one of the best autobiographies I've read.

I have read Andy Grove's One on One with Andy Grove and found the book very inspiring. Recently I got chance to read this memoir and learned his interesting life experience in WW II and in communist regime. This book let me know why and how he has succeeded. I highly recommend it.

The Book is easy to read and understand and gives you the sense that, today, you learned a fine lesson in growing up in self fulfillment and what it takes. The book is a story of success against a turmoil filled landscape. It is clearly a reaching out story, to young and old, in history, self-achievement, and good people. We are a much too distracted people today to follow through as this author had. A lot to learn, should you be able to apply oneself to the lesson. Bravo to this hungarian man and writer. I have always searched for this book, being Hungarian and appreciative of excellent historical and biographical stories.

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