

Failure is acceptable, often essential

Ainon M reflects on life's core calling

THIS book reminds me of Kahlil Gibran's saying, "If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life."

On September 18, 2007, Randolph (Randy) Frederick Pausch gave his last lecture titled 'Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams' in front of an audience of four hundred plus students, faculty and visiting members at the Carnegie Mellon University.

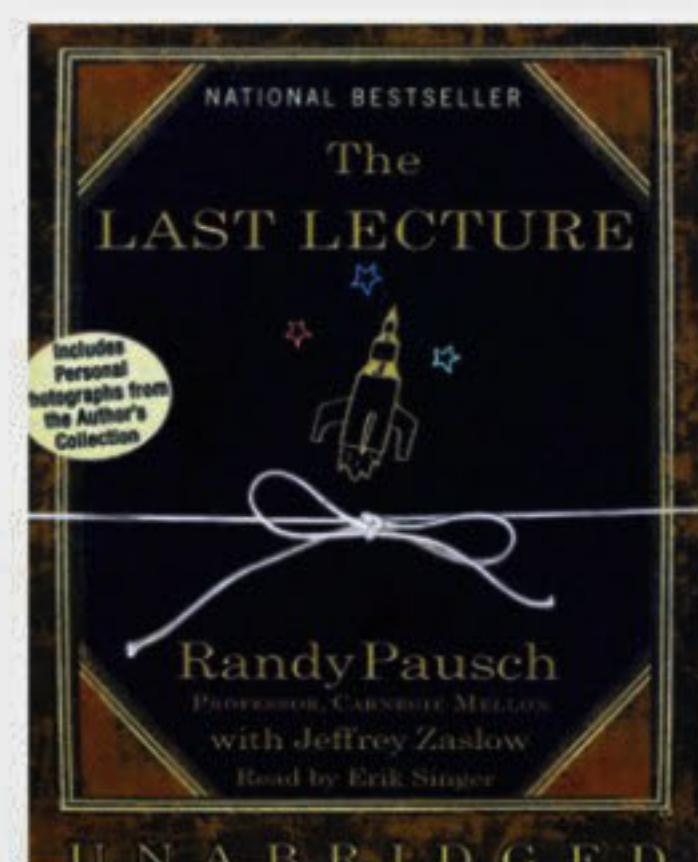
Among the audience was Jeffrey Zaslow, a columnist with The Wall Street Journal, who paid heed to Randy's speech.

Lecture, that has been translated in more than 18 languages. Randy did not write the book in a conventional manner of penning down his thoughts. The book is a product of verbal reflections on his life experiences that he shared with Zaslow through his head cell phone while on bike rides, fifty-three in total.

The theme of the book is living life. It is marked by a stream of deliberations on the author's passion for work and a set of moral codes he practised, as well as gained, while in the process of achieving his goals.

His life anecdotes come alive for readers as these are expressions of his heart, the courageous emotions of one not defeated in the face of death.

And finally the book, The Last Lecture, that has been translated in more than 18 languages. Randy did not write the book in a conventional manner of penning down his thoughts.



The Last Lecture Randy Pausch and Jeffrey Zaslow Hyperion, New York

relation to friends, colleagues, students and his family. He did not shy away from articulating the physical and emotional pains of dealing with cancer. He believed each challenge has a creative solution.

He makes us aware that smooth sail in life is a misnomer. 'The brick wall we encounter,' says the author, 'is a reminder that failure is not just acceptable but is often essential.'

spective of adversities. He gives us a story from his reality. While teaching the 'Building Virtual Worlds' course at Carnegie Melon he created a 'First Penguin Award' for students.

At some point in our lives we all wish to take a measure of who we really are. What defines us? That self-formulation takes shape in the context of others - all help shape our core beings!

"Time is all you have. And you

may find one day that you have less time than you think." For me, these words hit home in earnest. The essence of these words is beautifully interwoven in an instance where Randy ponders on the surprise he gave his wife, in front of a fully enthralled audience, by bringing a birthday cake on the stage where he gave his last lecture.

Ainon M writes fiction, composes poetry and lives in Carbondale, Illinois, USA

At A Glance

Birhombito Jibon Prothom Khondo Mohammad Zahurul Haq Jagriti Prokashoni Tel: 8623230, 8624218



Memoirs are always a treat. Here in this work, Haq speaks about the long path he has travelled in his search for happiness, indeed for self-assertion.



Abritti Bishoyok Probandhomala Ed Aminur Rahman Adorn Publication Tel: 9347577, 8314629

Here is a work on recitation, the proper term for it being abritti. And encapsulated in this fine anthology is a whole range of articles on what poetry is and indeed what it becomes in the hands of one who means to read it out loud.

Many Colours From Aeschylus to Syed Waliullah Adorn Publication Tel: 9347577, 8314629



Kabir Chowdhury's great passion has been a relentless study of the classics, especially Greek tragedy. But, then again, as a student and then as a teacher of literature, his travels through the literary landscape has been wide and varied.

Waltzing through literature land

Md. Shafiqul Islam captures creativity in a journal

CROSSINGS is a literary journal produced by the Department of English and Humanities, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh.

I was awestruck by some of the articles in this volume. This magazine presents reading material of great variety. This issue features articles contributed by faculties from many different tertiary institutions of Bangladesh and also two faculties from India.

Professor Mohit Ul Alam, the editor of the journal, himself elaborates the contents of the work in his very well-written introduction: "The issue has nineteen essays and five book reviews.

In the first section, there are five essays dealing with some aspects interfacing between literatures, cultures and theories. This section juxtaposes titles with variety. It deals with Tagore's prose by Fakrul Alam and Kaiser Haq's poetry by Sheikh Mehedi Hasan.

Creativity in The Mistress of Spices, Serving Crazy with Curry and Book of Rachel' by Rajyashree Khushu-Lahiri and Shweta Rao from India.

The second section, named "Postcolonial Literature", contains three essays, the first of which is by Professor Syed Manzoorul Islam, a noted author and leading intellectual of the country.

The third section titled "Diasporic Literature" also contains three essays, starting with a paper by Kaiser Haq on Nirad C. Chaudhury, the controversial iconoclast.

The fourth section dwells on Shakespeare's imperial dimension, another controversial topic, and becomes lively in the hands of Mohit Ul Alam, an accomplished and amusing writer.

The last group containing seven essays deals with the perennial problems of establishing English language learning on a sound pedagogical base. The essayists of this section make a praiseworthy effort as a whole to draw a comprehensive picture of the present state of English language in the country.

The edition of Crossings is lovely and appealing because it fulfills our longing for a well-composed and handsomely printed collection. While each piece is unique unto



Crossings ULAB Journal of English Studies Volume 2 No. 1 Fall 2009 Ed Mohit Ul Alam

itself, together they make for a satisfying romp through writers like Professor Syed Manzoorul Islam, Professor Kaiser Haq, Professor Fakrul Alam and Professor Mohit Ul Alam with substantial and impressive publication credits.

Re Fakrul Alam's article "Some Qualities of Permanence": Tagore's English prose, for example, attempts "to demonstrate how Tagore endeavoured to use the English language flexibly and imag-

inatively and how he was able to wield the language in diverse ways to suit the occasion, the audience, or the form of expression he had chosen."

Tagore felt unsure or cynical about his ability to master the pitfalls of the English language, "the definite and indefinite articles, the prepositions, the use of 'shall' and 'will'...-pitfalls which could not be "avoided by intuition" and could be acquired only through "tuition" he deduced.

The journal features Kaiser Haq with his excellent and amusing article titled, "The Late Mr. Nirad C. Chaudhury, C.B.E.(Hony.), and the Twilight of Empire". Haq, a noteworthy and major poet composing poetry in English from Bangladesh, equally excels in prose too.

Before I leave it to the reader to read and appreciate the journal independently, I cannot resist the

temptation of making a few more comments. Mohit Ul Alam, in his essay on Shakespeare's "Imperial Design", asks some relevant questions on Shakespeare. Apart from the "imperial theme" or Poetic Geography of which I hardly have room to pass my opinion here, I would prefer to concentrate on the point his argument revolves around.

The journal encloses, among others, a couple of unique, well-written, and thoughtful literary reviews by Syed Badrul Ahsan, a columnist, poet and Literary and Current Affairs Editor of the Daily Star.

To conclude, my sincere appreciation goes to the editor along with his entire team for his unassuming and unpretentious perseverance in bringing this journal out. This volume is engaging and satisfying but that makes me all the more eager for looking forward with much anticipation.

Md Shafiqul Islam, a senior civil servant, writes book reviews and literary criticism.

A clan in history

Muhammad Abdul Hai is happy reading about a family

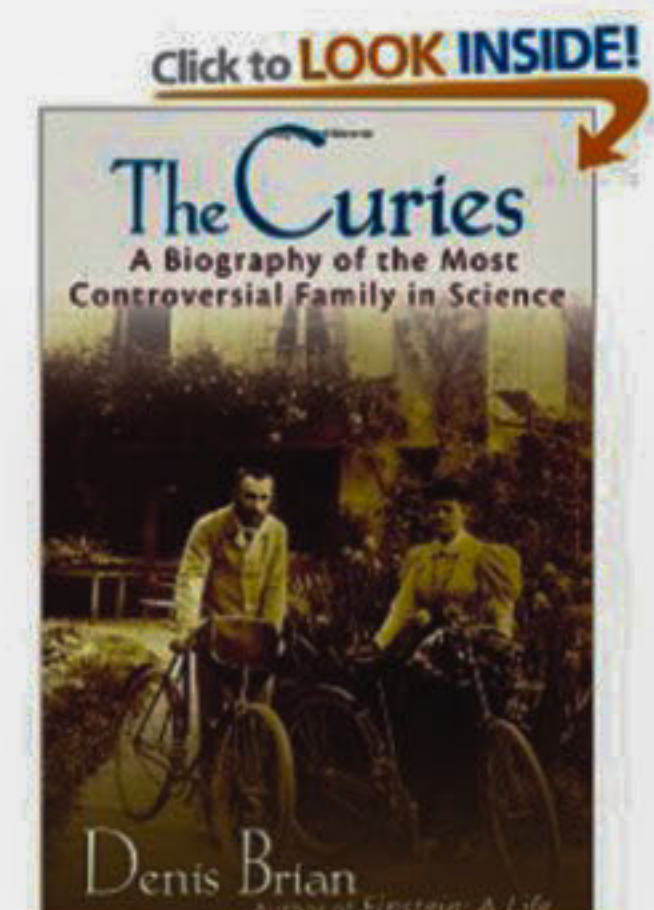
OUR imaginations run wild at the slightest hint of a mystery that possibly shrouds an event or a story. We forgo the comforting nap of the afternoon and peaceful slumber of the night for the excitement of watching a mystery movie or reading a strange story.

The Curies, written by Denis Brian, is a biography of the Curie family that received a total of six Nobel Prizes in chemistry and physics. This momentous achievement alone has made the study of the life of the members of the family a fascinating experience.

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privacy. The discovery of uranium, which was a joint effort of Curie and her husband's, was not reported as such by some newspapers in France. They, instead, reported that Marie Curie had nothing to do with the discovery of uranium because she was simply an assistant to Pierre, while the research was being done.

The book has so many interesting details that readers will be extremely tempted to finish it in one sitting. The elaborate description of the sad accident



The Curies Denis Brian John Wiley & Sons

in which Pierre was killed under a horse driven carriage, will make readers deeply moved. Then you have the diary entries of Marie, which seem to be her intimate conversation with her dead husband. Even a quick reading of them will leave you sobbing. It will make you feel what it is like to have someone very dear missing from your life.

Muhammad Abdul Hai is Principal, ABC International School, Narayanganj.

A voice speaks from the grave

Syed Badrul Ahsan has his questions about a dictator's thoughts

WHEN one hears of Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan's diaries, incredulity is what one is struck by. There is a reason for that. When towards the end of his decade-long presidency of Pakistan in the 1960s he came forth with his memoirs, bearing the arrogant title of Friends Not Masters, a goodly number of questions were raised about the ghost writers who probably had worked on them.

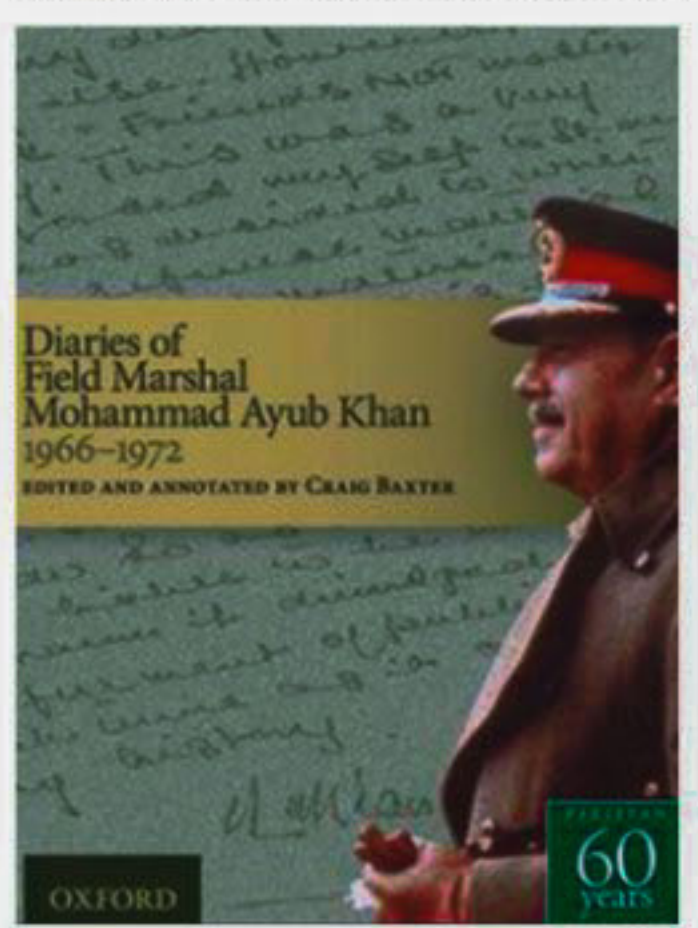
Now the diaries are upon us, raising a wholly different set of questions altogether. Why do they cover the period from 1966 to 1972 and not that which came earlier, when Ayub was at the height of his powers? Again, why did his family, son Gohar Ayub in particular, wait thirty three years after the old dictator's death to let the world in on the news that he had actually left his diaries behind?

Khan's diaries were composed after his death. Take your pick. After Friends Not Masters, it has never been easy to trust Pakistan's first military ruler.

As for the entries in the diaries, there is little mistaking that the thoughts are quintessentially Ayub-like. He respects no one and is forever ready to pronounce judgement on the reputation of all the good men who simply cannot take a liking to him. Of course he admires the likes of Justice Munir, a man who remains notorious for his ingratiating loyalty to the general who for no rhyme or reason began to call himself a field marshal. In life, Ayub admired few men. In death, his comments take on a vicious hue. Not even Abdul Jabbar Khan, the Bengali speaker of the national assembly, escapes his sarcasm.

There are the regular intervals in which the then military ruler denigrates his former foreign minister

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto at nearly every opportunity. Bhutto, he notes in a 2 December 1967 entry, had 'held a two-day convention in Lahore to launch his so-called People's Party'. The man's inability to read the writing on the wall is mind-boggling. Even when the writing



Diaries of Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan 1966-1972 Edited and annotated by Craig Baxter

gets to be bold and the wall draws closer to him, he pretends not to see it. But of all the men and matters that leave his nerves on edge, it is Bengalis and a rising Sheikh Mujibur Rahman that exercise his mind. This is how he speaks of Mujib on 26 April 1967: 'One revealing thing that came to light was that Mujibur Rahman had been telling

his followers that once they raise the flag of rebellion in East Pakistan, the Americans will rush to their assistance'. A few lines later, this is the acidic comment, 'It is quite obvious that this man is a menace and will continue to mislead the Bengalis as long as he lives'. You tend to get the feeling that the dictator was already cooking up the conspiracy case that was to come in December of the year. It was a case that would eventually lay him low and catapult Mujib to the status of a Bengali national icon.

The diaries are replete with fulminations against what Ayub sees as Bengali leanings toward India in general and Hinduism in particular. In May 1967, he is blunt: '... East Pakistan will go under Hinduism and be separated forever'. Ayub Khan's contempt for Bengal is a constant refrain throughout the diaries. As early on as 11 April 1967, after a meeting with Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, his new foreign minister, he writes: '(Pirzada) said that East Pakistan is incapable of seeing beyond their nose. In their hatred for West Pakistan, and especially the Punjabis, they were capable of doing anything stupid. They got an empire as a result of the partition of Bengal in 1905 with Assam included. They lost it through sheer stupidity'. The president must have enjoyed these crass remarks, for he seems to making his own at a meeting with Altaf Gauhar on 23 July 1967: '(Gauhar) asked me how long will they remain with Pakistan? I said till India was ready to swallow them'. A little while later, this is how he insults Bengalis, '... the Bengalis have no stomach for self-criticism nor for listening to the truth about themselves'.

Syed Badrul Ahsan is Editor, Current Affairs, The Daily Star.