

Betsy's Favorite Book

(Story words: board, pizza, Deirdre)

One of Betsy's favorite books is *This I believe: The Personal Philosophies of Remarkable Men and Women*. This book was inspired by a radio program in which people describe what they believe about life. The essays are brief and compelling.

Sometimes the author takes a very mundane, ordinary activity and shows how an understanding of this activity shapes a general attitude toward life. In "Be Cool to the Pizza Dude," Sarah Adams describes how her attitude toward people who deliver pizzas—even those who may cut her off in traffic as they rush to make a delivery—shapes how she thinks about success, work, and being kind to others.

"Always Go to the Funeral" by Deirdre Sullivan works the same way. Her father teaches her to always go to funerals, and Sullivan sees this habit as part of a larger philosophy regarding human connectedness. Sullivan writes that we do things that are difficult or tedious in the moment in order to connect with others in important ways.

Sometimes the author has a distinctive perspective on life because of what he or she has been exposed to. In “The Real Consequences of Justice,” Frederic Reamer describes his work as a member of a parole board who decides whether prisoners will remain in jail or be paroled. He and his team meet with the prisoners who explain how they have changed and hope to begin a new life. On the same day, the board will hear from the victims of those prisoners. They describe the impact on their lives of the prisoner’s crimes and how fearful they would be if the prisoner was released.

Reamer points out that for most people justice seems like a remote, abstract concept. But he sees justice as a complex choice that involves people like parole officers trying to come to the right answer as best they can, knowing that mistakes are possible and that real people will be impacted.

Some of the essays are interesting because they are written by famous people, such as Helen Keller or Jackie Robinson.

Betsy loves to read, but sometimes she doesn't feel like diving into a new big book. Some of the short pieces in *This I Believe*

were more thought-provoking and memorable to her than whole novels she has made it through.