



Swimming Across: A Memoir

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Set in the cruel years of Hungary's Nazi occupation and subsequent communist regime, the bestselling Swimming Across is the stunning childhood memoir of one of the leading thinkers of our time, legendary Intel chairman, Andrew S. Grove. Photos throughout.

Swimming Across: A Memoir Details

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From Reader Review Swimming Across: A Memoir for online ebook

Cherie says

TBD. It was a great story.

David P says

Andy Grove was born in Budapest in 1936, named Andris Groff. Hungary is a beautiful country, rich in culture and history, with superior schools--but 1936 was a bad time, especially for a Jewish boy. A Fascist government held power--one which willfully joined the Nazis in 1941, when Hitler declared war on Russia. Andy's father was conscripted to a "labor battalion"--slave labor on the front lines--and a while later his wife was informed he had "disappeared." As the tide of war turned, Germans occupied the country, deporting Jews to death at Auschwitz, and then the Russian army arrived, putting Budapest on the front line for about three months.

After the war, Andy's father reappeared, emaciated but alive, telling about ordeals which many with him did not survive. The Communist party gained power and set up its police state, then in 1956 the Hungarians revolted, only to be crushed by the Soviet army. That was when the author decided to escape to the West, walking at night across the border and towards the bright lights of Austria.

It all sounds frightening, yet the story is largely upbeat. Life is brighter when one is young, healthy and watched over by caring parents (especially Andy's mother). Apart from bombs and persecution, there were also warm relations with friends, a large web of relatives ready to help, dedicated teachers, excursions, studies, music and chemistry--the latter studied in school and also experimented with at home.

Beyond all these, here was a young man blessed with a sharp and sensitive mind, which bestows extra benefits and rewards, such as observations and conversations to broaden one's horizon. Life can be quite rich for a person willing to try out a wide range of experiences, just as it can be dull for one happy to stay on a routine track. Underlying it all, too, was Andy's drive for excellence--for earning and getting top marks in class, for analyzing a chemical mixture no student had successfully resolved before. No wonder his physics teacher once told a parent-teacher conference: "Life is like a big lake. All the boys get into the water and start swimming. Not all of them will swim across. But one of them, I'm sure, will. That one is Groff."

The same metaphor also fits Andris Groff's journey from Budapest to his relatives in New York, where he enrolled in City College. His colleagues soon shortened his first name to Andy, and since his second name was generally mispronounced, he changed it to "Grove" which in English comes close to the original pronunciation. His first big physics test earned him an "F" grade and a meeting with his professor, who suggested dropping the course. No, no--he was just caught off-guard, because the test was conducted with closed texts, not as in Hungary. On the next test, his grade was "A."

This is a story of Andy Grove's youth. It ends with his early studies in New York, a densely written short book brimming with warm emotion and insights into human character. Did this boy make it to the other side of the lake? You bet. He became one of the founders of Intel and chairman of the corporation. He also

brought his parents to the US and had the satisfaction of giving the manuscript of this book to his aging mother for review. One could hardly ask for more.

Coffeeandbooks says

I've heard about Grove when I read a book about Intel. As someone that has a laptop with the "intel inside" logo on it, I was curious to read about the founders of Intel. When I've read about Grove, I knew I wanted to know more. I'm glad I got this book because it was fascinating.

I've read stories about Jews during the Holocaust, but I didn't read books about Jews during the Communist era. He presents the Communism realistically. Even the jokes were spot on, like the one with the car. His struggle to get to University was something I knew about, as my grandmother was in a similar situation to his, but she was less lucky.

The book is about one person's story in the 50s, but as now we are faced with so many migrants, it made me wonder, how many Groves stayed in the Jungle in France or drowned in a capsized boat a few miles from the coast? How could our lives be better if a few policies were made different and a few more charities involved in rescuing people?

Full review on my blog: Coffee & Books

Andy Anderson says

Fast reading book about Andrew Grove who left Hungary just after the 1956 revolution. The highs and lows of living in a country that survived WW2 and Communism. He eventually help start Intel and became very successful. Not bad for a Hungarian immigrant. Good read....

Liz Neale says

The memoir of Andrew Grove the CEO of Intel.

Ted Alling says

A chilling tale of a Hungarian immigrant that comes to America. The details, he remembers about his childhood are unreal. He ends up becoming the CEO of Intel.

"Haunting and Inspirational. It should be required reading in schools." Tom Brokaw

Ushan says

Andras Grof was born in Budapest in 1936, the only child in a middle-class secular Hungarian Jewish family. His father was a partner in a dairy business, and his mother worked in her parents' grocery store before marriage, and became a housewife afterwards. In 1942 Grof's father was conscripted to a labor battalion, and Grof did not see him until after the war, when he came back emaciated. In 1944, Germany occupied Hungary and the Arrow Cross party came to power, forcing the Jews into ghettos. Grof's mother bought forged documents, and moved to their friends in the countryside with her son, living under an assumed name for half a year. In 1945, the Red Army liberated Hungary, and a Russian soldier raped Grof's mother. She went to the authorities, but stopped short of identifying the rapist for fear that if he were shot, his comrades would exact revenge on his victims (she was still alive when this book was being written, and she checked the manuscript). After the war, Grof had a very happy childhood: he went to school, tried himself in fencing, kayaking, swimming, dancing, played the piano, and studied English with a tutor. After graduating from high school in 1955, Grof applied to the Department of Chemistry at the University of Budapest. He was afraid that he would be denied admission as a son of a class enemy, but Grof's father discovered that a brother of one of his comrades from the labor battalion was now a professor at the university; this professor seems to have removed the incriminating papers, so Grof was admitted. Grof's first year at the university was idyllic; the second year coincided with the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Grof did not fight in the revolution, but in the turmoil his aunt suggested that he should emigrate. He took the train to a town on the Hungarian-Austrian border, and paid a smuggler to guide him across the border at night. Once in Austria, Grof found a charity resettling refugees, and told it that he wanted to go to the United States. The charity people were surprised when Grof honestly told them that he had not fought the Russians; almost everyone they met said they did; yet they sponsored his resettlement in the United States. In 1957, Grof arrived in Brooklyn, where he studied chemical engineering and worked, graduating from the CCNY with a B.S. in 1960 and from UC Berkeley with a Ph.D. in 1963; he anglicized his surname as Grove, as its pronunciation in English is close to that of Grof in Hungarian. In 1968, Grove cofounded Intel Corporation, which is now one of the world's biggest corporations, with Robert Noyce and Gordon Moore, and was its CEO in 1987-1998. He never went back to Hungary.

Kimberly says

Interesting but style of writing is very simplistic. He wrote this for his grandkids which makes sense since it seems to be written as a way of letting them know the interesting young life of their grandad, rather than as a deep-thought analysis of his early life in Hungary.

Diane says

Andrew Grove, was born András Grof, in Budapest to a Jewish family. He survived World War II and the occupations of the Nazis and then the Russian communists. It was during the vicious crackdown after the failed 1956 revolution that his aunt admonished him "Andris, you must go, and you must go immediately." Swimming Across tells the story of his childhood with the usual challenges of growing up complicated by political turmoil and terror.

Grove is the name he took because Americans pronounced it closest to the Hungarian pronunciation of his original surname.

His earlier books are business classics and his writing style is clear and concise and still entertaining. A fascinating story well told.

Tirath says

Simple writing.

Andy's childhood was super fun to read about; and I might even say that the story is not that amazing. It felt as though he lived quite a cushy life in Hungary, but when the Soviet way started getting more pronounced, although he kept succeeding, society was crumbling.

His journey of getting out of Hungary is not anywhere near what a grueling life or struggle might be - but what I experienced as a reader was amazing.

I could see myself traveling with him across Hungary and Germany, and the relief when he came near American help; and when he finally landed in the US - and how he hated it - and thought "These homes have never heard bombs or artillery" ; that was a revelation.

A new sense of admiration for what the US way was - give me your hungry and poor; and see how that has paid such rich dividends to the American society.

Wish I read it as a kid.

Nicole Ponzoa says

Childhood of Andrew S. Grove, founder of Intel. Covers 1930s- mid 1950s, Nazi occupation of German, rise of Communism in Hungary through Hungarian uprising in 1956.

Simply told recollections but of an incredible time period. History come to life.

William Schram says

Swimming Across is a memoir by Andy Grove about his early years and eventual emigration to the United States. Born in Hungary on September 2, 1936, Grove was no stranger to troubles and tribulations. With the opening of the Second World War, Hungary decided to side with the Axis Powers when Germany attacked Russia. With a somewhat detached air, Grove goes through his experiences with the Hitler army and Stalinist Russia. Not that he wasn't affected by any of these happenings, but I don't know if I could keep my cool with recalling some of these events; especially when he starts talking about the disappearances.

In any case, the book is very good, but I skimmed a lot of it. I do know that Grove never returned to his native Hungary as of the printing of this book. Grove states that it is because Hungary is no longer what it once was and I can understand that.

I had not heard of Andrew S. Grove either when I started with this book, so I am pretty bad with the names of recent famous people. Now I know that Grove, born Grof Andris, was a founder of Intel and one of its most celebrated chairmen.

Lisa says

Interesting account of life in Hungary from WWII through the '56 revolutions. The prose and structure leave much to be desired, but it is kind of like listening to your father or grandfather tell stories of the old days. Since mine aren't around, I am trying to imagine what of this they might have experienced as I piece together a clearer family history.

Guillermo DeLeon says

A great story of adversity and ultimate redemption. Grove's story is truly inspirational.

Shannon Holt says

Great book about Andy Grove's life growing up in Hungary. Highly recommend this.
