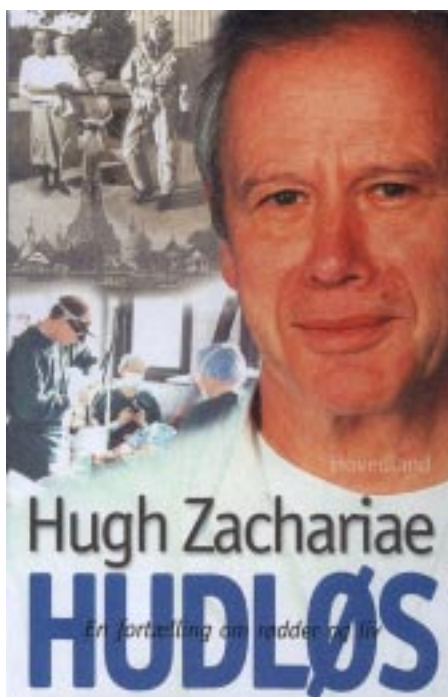


BOOK REVIEW

HUDLØS - the Autobiography of Professor Hugh Zachariae

Hugh Zachariae: HUDLØS, en fortælling om rødder og liv. 230 pages (in Danish) + 32 pages illustrated, price 248 DKK. Publisher Hovedland, Stenvej 21, DK-8270 Højbjerg, ISBN 87 7739 482 8



Professor Hugh Zachariae published his 230-page autobiography immediately before his 75th birthday on November 5, 2000. It marks a milestone in the history of a prominent dermatologist and family father. "Hudløs" in Danish literally means "without skin," but the word is mainly used in its abstract sense to describe something on the lines of significant acts and consequences that occur without compromise. The autobiography carries the subtitle "A story about roots and life."

The root is a family tree with academics, naval officers, ministerial administrators and upper-rank citizens who lead active lives around the world. Zachariae's brown eyes come from ancestors in St. Croix, and

he himself was born in Bangkok, Siam, where his father organized the railway system in those early days. After graduation from the famous and infamous Metropolitan School in Copenhagen City he entered a military career, first in the navy, then in the airforce as a pilot. He then continued with medical studies at Copenhagen University, a period as general practitioner in Sweden, and finally, at a fairly advanced age, began to work with dermatology at Rigshospitalet, where, after writing his dissertation on histamine and skin and living in the USA for a while, he became a consultant. This was followed by a period as Professor and Chairman of the Department of Dermatology at Marselisborg Hospital, Århus, a small and far from modernized department which he raised to prominence in international dermatology. On his early retirement as Professor, maintaining the administrative chair, he generously handed over the academic leadership to younger talented colleagues whom he himself had supervised during their careers.

The autobiography is primarily of importance to the Zachariae family and to colleagues in medicine, but is also interesting to the general public as a document of an interesting life of a man who had strong views on issues such as AIDS policies and the Thule airbase radiation accident, and who courageously plunged into public debate.

The book is not a systematic record

of Zachariae's life but contains a number of sketches describing various periods and events of civic life during the past century, especially the years before and during World War II. It is probably little known that Zachariae was active as an organizer of civic strikes in Copenhagen and was responsible for hiding a stock of weapons for the resistance movement.

Zachariae is a man of love, passion, energy and challenges: love for his wife and close family and passion on behalf of his profession, patients and the truth, with the energy of a giant but at the same time a sensitive and highly cultivated person. In the text and between the lines the autobiography discretely presents the character of the person. The description of Zachariae's care of his father is touching. The autobiography contains moments of pain, for example his exit from the navy and from Marselisborg. He is the kind of man who needs challenges and who always needs to go one step further, as he very precisely describes in a poem written during his young days as a pilot (p. 98).

Young dermatologists should read this autobiography and feel inspired to make their own choices in their careers and to make their lives rich as Hugh Zachariae did through courage and active decisions. In his book and in his life, Eva, the lady behind his success, is not neglected.

Jørgen Serup
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