

CURTIS BILL PEPPER

HAPPINESS

*Fragments of Happiness in the Lives
of the Famous and Others Among Us*

*Life is not what one lived,
but what one remembers,
and how one remembers it,
in order to recount it.*

Gabriel Garcia Marquez,
Living To Tell The Tale

Per Beverly... never a fragment

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the great help and assistance of a few friends over the years it has taken me to complete this book.

They include Miles Rubin, Pauline Sturgill, Diane Kelder, Rosemary Righter, Ben Gazzara, Peter Alegi, Inge Manzù, and Cardinal Loris Capovilla.

Research libraries in the Vatican, and the British, French and American Academies in Rome were invaluable, along with the work of other scholars – especially that of Joshua D. Zimmerman on the intransigent role of Pius XII toward Jews during the Nazi Holocaust (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Invaluable counsel came from Alberto Vitale, Brooke Allen, Beverly Pepper, Honor Moore, Joseph Helman, Ken Emerson, Joseph Becherer, Robert Elegant, Ernesto Menestò, and Agi Guttadauro.

My Italian translators – Lorenzo Carrara and Barbara Minelli – achieved miracles. Carol Edwards provided a meticulous, inspired copy-edit, clarifying grammar and the fusion of times and places across half a century.

Many thanks are due to my editor, James O'Shea Wade, to literary agents Susanna Zevi and Kay McCauley, and to Jane Kramer for her inspiring support of the book.

Finally, I owe deep gratitude to Paola Gribaudo, veteran Italian editor, for making possible this Italian bilingual publication with world-wide distribution.

For relentless computer skills and devotion, I am indebted to Giulia Alagna and Christy Singleton. For manuscript readings and counsel, Marco Carbonari and John Pepper.

Yet beyond all else, this book was made possible by the endless support and love of my wife, Beverly Pepper.

Realization of the book
Gli Ori, Pistoia

Graphic design, layout
Gli Ori Redazione

Print
Bandecchi e Vivaldi, Pontedera

ISBN 978-88-7336-544-0
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NOTE

These narratives include moments in the lives of four popes – John XXIII, Pius XI, Pius XII, and John Paul I. The respective procurators of causes for their beatification or sainthood have variously praised or advanced no major objections to the contents of these narratives.

Notably, this included Peter Gumpel, S.J., postulator for the beatification of Pius XII, in approving the historical accuracy of my text. As Pope Pius XII's advocate, however, he sought variant interpretations of otherwise acceptable facts or passages, as noted on page 112.

1. Human Tapestry of Happiness

*Happiness is as a butterfly, which,
When pursued, is always beyond our grasp,
But which, if you sit down quietly,
May alight upon you.*
Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*

The search, the dream for something beyond ourselves, some pathway to happiness, runs through the following stories of some remarkable men and women of our time – actors and artists, saints and popes, surgeons and cancer survivors, a stone mason in West Virginia, an American princess, and the founder of Israel in the Sinai desert.

Its fleeting presence also graces many others – a beautiful woman with leprosy, a girl with a python, a cancer survivor with a ladybug, a youth on a hang-glider, a Hindu in the arms of a Catholic nun, and a mountain village in north Italy when a bricklayer's son became a Roman pope.

From across the years, these moments appear suddenly before us – so many of them and in so many ways that readers, finding themselves in one or other narrative, experience unexpected insights, and even solutions, to many dilemmas in their own lives. Such moments, in our singular or collective existence, also contain an immediate presence, which appears to be far more urgent and important than half a century ago.

Finally, they merge into a human tapestry of happiness with an interlocking of narratives in reports to the *United Press*, *CBS*, *Newsweek*, *Vogue*, and the *New York Times*. As they arrive, each encounter seems to indicate a true pathway to happiness, until it appears elsewhere in another form – another arrival of Hawthorne's elusive butterfly.

Nor were they alone, for their flights of happiness invariably reflected my own – beginning with the war in Italy and meeting a ghost-figure of Death on a road in the moonlight, whom my friend Nanni had seen once before among the bodies of the fallen on the banks of the Ebro.