

Still Surprised

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Synopsis

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If many of your organizations have become more democratic, more resilient, more adaptable, and more transparent, it is because Warren Bennis has provided much of the intellectual and ethical fuel over the past half-century to our most influential and successful leadership experts and practitioners.

Still Surprised illuminates how the world-changing ideas of Bennis and his colleagues resulted from the searing crucible of their own encounters, events and experiences—not within a sterile laboratory of ideas. It demonstrates how students of leadership are formed by what they discover about themselves on roads that are opened to them by circumstances—and by the roles they choose to carve out for themselves as a result.

The memoir begins, appropriately, with the surprise of an awkward and confused teenage Warren Bennis being prodded into his first leadership position, in vicious combat during the latter stages of World War II. This child of the depression is then surprised by the opportunity to attend college, thanks to the GI Bill, at the raucous and revolutionary Antioch College. Next come a number of breathtaking roles: working alongside some of the world's most intriguing and celebrated figures, from Cambridge to Calcutta, to reshape organizational life; successfully putting his own theories into practice as a university provost and president; and coaching not only U.S. presidents and top corporate CEOs but successive waves of ambitious young women and men.

This is also a memoir of our times, seen through the prism of Bennis's own development during crucial inflection points of recent decades. His own medley of insecurity, hard work, determination to invent a new life, and growing capacity to engage others all came into play amidst transformations within our society.

Reader's comments

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