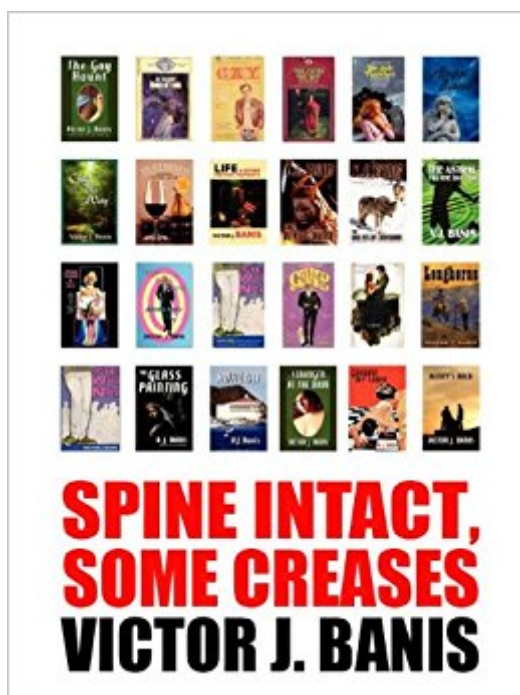


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Spine Intact, Some Creases (Borgo Bioviews)



Synopsis

A legendary name from the Golden Age of Paperbacks, VICTOR J. BANIS spins a witty and exuberant tale of A Thousand and One Knights, flitting blithely from tale to tail, in one era and out the other. Part autobiography, part a history of the Gay Revolution, part writing manual, part juicy gossip, with a few tasty recipes thrown in for good measure, *Spine Intact, Some Creases* is a summing up -- alternately hilarious and touching, instructive and impassioned, and always entertaining -- of the remarkable life and work of a writer hailed by top gay pulp historian Michael Bronski as "one of my heroes." Banis' memoir provides a poignant history of West Coast paperback publishing in the Sixties, and one author's journey from small beginnings to critical and financial success as a writer -- but it's far more than that: witty, elegantly written, funny, sad, smart, and even wise. Every penman-apprentice should read this book -- twice! -- Robert Reginald

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Customer Reviews

As important as this book is (not to mention just plain fun to read) I'm surprised there isn't a raft of reviews. Yes, it's a little pricey and I'm as cheap as the next person. But this one, trust me, is worth the money. Victor Banis was a hero who didn't set out to be, and doesn't even claim the title. But he

is. I love good fiction, but I've always been partial to nonfiction, especially biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs. I've read good, bad, and ick. There are many reasons to praise this book, not least of them is that Banis was a pioneer in gay writing at a time when that was a hazardous thing to be, an openly gay man before Stonewall, a time when there were no gay pride parades and gay pride itself was almost unthinkable. Homosexual characters in fiction were required to be miserable, self-hating, and preferably suicidal. Well, somebody forgot to tell Victor Banis that he couldn't create cheerful, brave, happy gay characters. So he did. If you've never read any of The Man From C.A.M.P. books you should. Banis was young when he wrote them and they are a trip. They're fall-down funny, and the indomitable hero, Jackie, makes Batman look like a wuss (although in appearance he may be closer to Robin). Banis is a writer who clearly delights in what he does and who he is. A master of the written word, he has written 150 books that he can remember and others he has forgotten, under various names, in a career that stretches across nearly fifty years. He knew everybody. He even talked to Hef inside the Playboy mansion, of all places for a gay boy to find himself. Jackie, of C.A.M.P., would have made the most of it. Spine Intact is a difficult book to write about simply because of its scope. It encompasses a tremendous amount of political history regarding publishing, censorship, gay people, homophobia, and more. Banis was subjected to spying by the government, and during his writing and publishing years he had the Sword of Damocles hanging over his head in the form of possible arrest, prosecution, and jail time. He saw the McCarthy Era as it happened. He had packages and letters opened by the Post Office. Yet through it all, the reader doesn't get the feeling of someone who is frightened, bitter, angry, or full of "why-me". He may very well have been all of those things from time to time; he would hardly have been human if he hadn't. But Victor Banis is quite possibly the most balanced (he would probably say, with a laugh, that he's unbalanced) individual around. Banis has become an icon without intending to be, and any author who writes books with gay characters and every reader who reads them, owes Banis and people like him. They took the lumps and the risks, and defended free speech. Spine Intact has humor, wit, gossip (but not the malicious kind), history, and compassion. He tells stories of a family that lived in poverty in every way except that of spirit. In fact, when you read about the Banis family you feel that you may be reading about the richest family on earth. They're not a group of Pollyannas and they had their ups, downs, and tragedies but they had each other. There's a delightful story of him and his mother in a bookstore, with his mom calling out the titles of books ("Here's Lesbians On Parade." Is that one of yours?") to the sound of dropping jaws. He doubts she even knew what a lesbian was. I fell in love with Mother Banis at that moment. There is so much in this book that a complete review would be as long as Les Misérables.

My only complaint, and it's not really a complaint but just an observation, is that it should have been two separate books, one dealing with the his autobiographical material and gay history aspect, which were so intertwined, and the other with his sprightly comments on writing and the world, comments that are pithy and wise. It's hard to say if he is amused or bemused by life. Both, I think. Just as an example of the comments and of his breezy, reader-friendly way of writing, I hope he and his publisher will indulge me in quoting a couple of my favorite lines (there are so many!) "...regret [is] just another...way of flagellating oneself. ... If you like yourself what is there to regret?" (page 326) On supposed Biblical condemnation of homosexuality: " I just know some are dusting off their Sodom and Gomorrah mantelpiece villages at this very moment." (page 342) In the last chapter, writing about not worrying about offending someone because you're going to, sooner or later (he says it much better than that and throws in a great quote from Winston Churchill's wife) he ends by saying "...serve the cheese balls anyway. Someone will love them." (page 358). Trust me. There's a story behind that!

Though I have read this book before in the original paper edition I decided to have a look into the new Kindle. Isn't as bulky as the book is but the pages seem to flow very smoothly, as usual with a Victor Banis book. A wealth of people and stories from the 1960s-70s etc., keep the book flowing until you find how quickly you reach the end. A wonderful experience by a great author, I would recommend this book highly to any writer or reader. In his bio you can sense the man in love with his writing work, that's how it should. Thank Victor for sharing your life with me.

Victor J. Banis should be hailed a hero for the battles he fought and the trails that he blazed, and every writer should be grateful for all that he has done. He deserves an apology from the Federal government (especially the USPS) for the way he was treated. In the land of the free and the home of the brave, where all men are supposed to be created equal, the government's treatment of Banis is embarrassing and appalling. With a trumped-up obscenity charge and trial threatening to send him to prison, and an ongoing possibility of prison for what he was writing, Banis fought back and won. For me, any American with a social conscience should be furious over the treatment this man endured at the hands of the government - and I for one certainly am outraged. I don't normally read non-fiction, but I'm glad that I read *Spine Intact, Some Creases*. The title alone was humorous and a bit intriguing. Banis effortlessly blends very poignant moments with hilarious tales, and keeps the reader turning the pages. I often read a few paragraphs of this downright, hilarious and laugh out loud funny book to my husband, and he found the stories just as funny as I. I give this book a very

enthusiastic thumbs up. Without a doubt, Spine Intact, Some Creases was the best book that I read in 2008. Buy this book - you won't be disappointed. Mr. Banis is even posting several chapters of this book on his website. Read a few of the chapters and then don't delay ordering your copy. Out of 5 stars, I'd give this book at least 6 stars, so take my recommendation - this is a great book. Through it all, Mr. Banis kept writing, and thankfully he keeps writing, and his fabulous works are still being published.

Wow! I'm so glad he wrote this book. It's everything I'd hoped it would be and so much more. I laughed, I learned, and by page 332 I was a bit teary. Victor Banis turned himself loose when he wrote this book---he wrote just what he wanted to, and that honesty is priceless. Part of the joy of the book is the feel that you get for the person that Victor is----victorious. The lines in parenthesis, the entendres, everything about the book works together. It's like a fabulous casserole!

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