

# KIRKUS

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# REVIEWS

## TITLE INFORMATION

### **FALLING INTO NOW**

*Memories of Sport, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Education*

Claire Smith

iUniverse (260 pp.)

\$34.97 hardcover, \$20.99 paperback, \$3.99 e-book

ISBN: 978-1-5320-2642-3; October 19, 2017

## BOOK REVIEW

Smith's debut memoir recounts her rise in the equestrian world and the accident that changed her life.

This book alternates between present-day reflections (“*Now*”) and memories that go back to the author’s childhood. Smith, who was born in the mid-1960s and raised in the rural town of Burritts Rapids, south of Ottawa, started riding horses at an early age. As she matured, she shaped her life around riding competitions, placing highly in events across Canada. Even after she entered the working world as a computer programmer, she continued to compete, splitting her time between Canada and the warmer climes of North Carolina. Eventually, Smith won a spot on Canada’s equestrian team at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. After a disappointing performance there, she continued to ride competitively until a fateful day the following year. In the middle of an event, her horse tumbled, throwing her headfirst to the ground. After months of rehabilitation, during which Smith relearned how to walk and speak, her memory reawakened. She became focused on getting back into riding, despite warnings from doctors and family, but soon realized that she could no longer do so at her previous level. She then found a new focus: pursuing a doctorate in counseling and specializing in research on the aftereffects of brain injury. She then dealt with the onset of a chronic neurological illness that eventually necessitated the use of a wheelchair. Over the course of this memoir, the writing shifts from a reserved recounting of Smith’s past into more artistic reflections of her post-injury life. Between these sections, Smith allows her parents, Brad and Renée Smith, to tell the story of her treatment; the author, at the time, suffered from post-traumatic amnesia and couldn’t form new memories. It’s an engaging technique that mirrors Smith’s own change in thinking following her accident. Occasionally, though, the prose becomes somewhat repetitive, restating the same conclusions in successive paragraphs; the final section also includes some aimless anecdotes. For the most part, however, Smith’s text is educational and compelling.

A unique memoir that focuses more on recovery than tragedy.