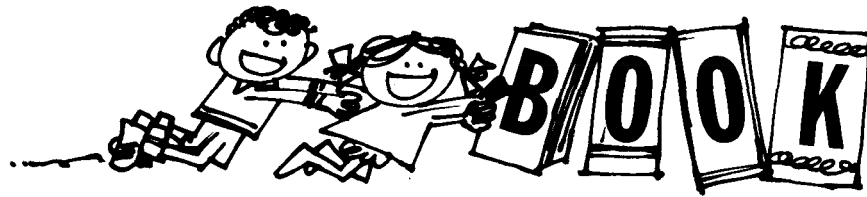


**Book Review Editor
Ruth Stewart**



**HOW TO BE THE PARENTS OF A
HANDICAPPED CHILD**

by Kerry Kenihan

A Penguin Publication of 202 pages

Published in Australia, 1981.

Cost \$5.95

The book deals frankly and honestly with the many and varied problems of adjusting to life with a handicapped child. It is easy to read and for a pleasant change is written in readily understood English.

It is basically a book which is written for the parents of a handicapped child, however I feel that many people, doctors, social workers and the community at large could benefit from the knowledge shared in the book. The book offers no miracle cures or immediate answers, but suggests ways in which adjustments to your new life can be made easier.

Mrs Kenihan discusses many subjects within the book, that to my knowledge have not been tackled by any other author. She concentrates not only on the child, but the effect which the child can have upon the family as a whole.

She discusses the plight of the migrant and the single parent, also the trauma which many parents face when they decide to have their child institutionalised. As well as this she touches extending the family after the birth of a handicapped child, as well as the possibility of integration into society through normal educational channels. As a finishing touch to the book Mrs Kenihan has compiled a fairly comprehensive guide to groups and organisations which may be able to help you and/or your child through this difficult time. This guide covers all States.

I found that the book did not really cover the case of the undiagnosed child, although the subject was touched upon. Possibly the reason for this is the fact that Mrs Kenihan's child was diagnosed at birth.

Many parents are left to face the problems of an undiagnosed child alone. Nobody is quite game enough to tell the parents until the absolute last moment that there is something wrong with their child. These parents spend many months, possibly even years tramping from one doctor to another searching for an answer, often only to be told that they are worrying excessively, that they do not really know what they are talking about or perhaps are being overprotective, especially if the child is their first. I would stress at this point how vitally important it is that professional people not dismiss these parents, but listen to them and the reasons for suspecting something is wrong. Many parents are left in the dark, when it would be much easier for them to be given the honest opinion of the doctor, whether based on an educated guess or medical tests. In the majority of cases parents are more readily equipped to handle a known situation. I was one of these parents struggling to find an answer and if my son had not been so severely physically handicapped, we may still be searching.

I would not hesitate to recommend the book to anyone, especially a parent whose child had just been diagnosed as handicapped in any way.

Mrs Patricia Florent

Mother of a 21-month-old child who has cerebral palsy.



Childless by Choice

by Jean E. Veevers.

220 pp. Butterworths,

Toronto 1980 Price \$16.

The question "why do people have children?" is a pretty large and complex one, which cannot be answered simply in terms of the utilitarian or Malthusian theories favoured by most demographers and students of fertility. One possible strategy for answering the large and complex question might be to focus on the small group who deliberately opt not to have children, and ask "why are some people voluntarily childless?"

There is a growing number of studies of the voluntarily childless, particularly the married voluntarily childless, but this is the first full-length book on the topic which studies the phenomenon, rather than offers a defence of the childfree life.

Dr Veevers reports on a study of 136 voluntarily childless people in Canada, which she carried out between 1972 and 1978. Like all the other researchers in this area, she faced the problem of dealing with a sample drawn (by advertising for volunteers) from a population whose characteristics, including size, are unknown. While she is properly cautious about generalising too far from her data, she concludes that the voluntarily childless married couple can be described as follows: urban upper-middle class, non-religious, well educated, committed to "adults only" pleasures, placing heavy emphasis on the intensity of the relationship between spouses and, by and large, very contented with their situation, whether they opted to be childless very early on, or simply drifted into it through postponing having children until a lifestyle had evolved which precluded them entirely. Her conclusion is that the childfree couples she spoke with are neither sick nor sad; rather "for many of the childless, the maintenance of sound mental health is not achieved in spite of being childless, but is predicated on the continued avoidance of parenthood". (p.159)