

# If only I were a little boy or sketches about life springs, where they spring from and how they diffuse us

SMÝKAL, Josef. *Chtěl bych být malým klukem aneb Črty o pramenech života, z čeho tryskají a jak se rozlévají v nás samotných* [online]. Brno, 2013 [cit. 2014-03-24]. Available at: <http://www.smykal.ecn.cz/publikace/kniha19.htm>

## Reviewed by Martin Fink

Josef Smýkal is a personality, who dedicated his life almost in its entirety to the disabled. At first, he mastered the craft of basket making, and yet his interest in the issues of the disabled was such, that he later got the degree of pedagogy and music teaching at the Pedagogical faculty of Palacký University and subsequently worked for his whole life with children with visual impairment. He was a pedagogue at the Elementary school for the blind and visually disabled in Brno, the founder and director of the Typhlopedic centre at the elementary school and kindergarten for the blind. Since 2000, he has been working in the department of documentation of typhlopedic information in Technical museum Brno and is at the same time a researcher. Eventhough PhDr. Josef Smýkal was born in 1926, he remains a very active person. To prove this fact, we bring you his latest publication, which he published on his web in 2013.

Josef Smýkal decided to write this book on the one hand on the basis of the impetus of his surroundings, and on the other hand, further motivation to him were the narratives of Josef Vinklář (once a very popular Czech actor) about his take on life. Josef Smýkal thus tried to create a retrospective narrative about his life, professional and personal alike. He commits to playing some roles that have been, as he puts it, assigned to him, but also to those roles he chose himself. He also contemplates whether or not these roles were successful, yet leaves the final evaluation up to his readership.

The book consists of ten chapters which are assorted from the memories of his childhood, family and school in Vlčnov, where Smýkal (2013, s. 40) himself says: *"This were merely five years, and yet they formed a firm cornerstone of my lifelong struggle to fill my life creatively."* over his arrival at the Brno Sightless Institute as a student, the meeting of his future wife who was also a student of this institute up to the active work for the visually disabled. To name but a few activities of Josef Smýkal,

one should mention the participation on the foundation of the Czech Audio Book (1960), magazine publishing in Braille, or his work for the Blind museum in Brno.

Chapter titles:

|                                               |                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Changing one's life roles                     | <i>(Přetvářet své životní role)</i>                      |
| If only I were a little boy from Vlčnov again | <i>(Chtěl bych znovu být<br/>malým klukem z Vlčnova)</i> |
| A little shepherd boy                         | <i>(Já pasáček malý)</i>                                 |
| The beasts of ours                            | <i>(To naše zvířectvo)</i>                               |
| Springs of life                               | <i>(Prameny života)</i>                                  |
| Vlčnov school ( <i>Z vlčnovské školy</i> )    |                                                          |
| A handful of memories                         | <i>(Hrst vzpomínek<br/>na slepeckou školu v Brně)</i>    |
| on the Brno school for the blind              |                                                          |
| Cold fosters                                  | <i>(Studený odchov)</i>                                  |
| Preparing for an independent life             | <i>(Příprava pro samostatný život)</i>                   |
| At the village green                          | <i>(Na návsi)</i>                                        |
| Epilogue – Petr Gratias                       |                                                          |
| Hooked illustration                           |                                                          |

The book is beautiful, full of memories of the author's life. As the epilogue says, the book is written in a realistic fashion without any embellishment, and yet with a hint of life's poetry. The author gradually changed his visions and longings by his studies and work, which could only be described as a mission. It is therefore impossible to criticize the book itself or to contemplate whether this book should be published. The only thing we can do is wish the author a lot of strength for his future doings, for I, as a student, still find inspiration in the life and work of Josef Smýkal.

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