

16/11/13

books

in association with **JARROLD** - don't miss our ne

Lively account of a man who dared to dream

Serendipity: A Journey With Joe Larter
Joe Larter
Swallowtail, £9.99

Trevor Heaton

Serendipity: the delightful word coined by Horace Walpole in 1754 which means the ability to make happy discoveries by accident.

It's a lovely word, and a lovely skill to be blessed with.

But, really, Norfolk businessman Joe Larter is doing himself down in applying it as the title of his remarkable life story.

The founder of Pleasurewood Hills (and much else besides) managed to draw strength from a terrible and unexpected family tragedy to shape a life full of incident, and daring to make dreams become reality.

If you thought business was all about chaps in suits sitting round discussing profit margins then you haven't met Joe Larter. As he says in his introduction: 'A trait I have is always to be positive and want to say 'yes' to any new and exciting-looking experience.'

The passion and enthusiasm he has brought to his numerous ventures is inspirational. When things have occasionally fallen through, or when the economy faltered and stymied his plans, Joe has just shrugged his shoulders and got on with planning his next idea.

Born in Martham in 1939, to a family which can trace its Norfolk roots to an 18th century landlord of the World's End at Mulbarton, Joe's father Oswald (Ossie) was a successful businessman in his own right, who was quick to spot opportunities in salvage and reclaim.

As Joe grew up, he was sent - by train, in those happy M&GN days - to King Edward VII Grammar School at King's Lynn. After leaving he contemplated a military career before receiving the stunning news that was to change his life.

His larger-than-life father had suffered a devastating stroke, aged 50, leaving Joe to run the family business at just 19.

It was a challenge he rose to brilliantly, and his subsequent ventures (which somehow seems a much more appropriate word than 'businesses')

“The passion and enthusiasm he has brought to his numerous ventures is inspirational”



■ Joe Larter with Woody Bear and, inset, Joe starting school.



East Anglia. His courage was triumphantly vindicated when annual

famously included setting up the Pleasurewood Hills theme park in 1983.

It was a daring - even risky - attempt to bring the American theme park experience to

visitor numbers topped 552,000. This book will be very nostalgic to anyone growing up in a Norfolk village in the 1940s, and tales of the great Sidney Grapes show that Joe remains a proud Norfolkman to his core.

And a word of praise too for editor David Porter, whose light and skilful touch has helped shape Joe's book and make this an engaging read about a life lived to the full.