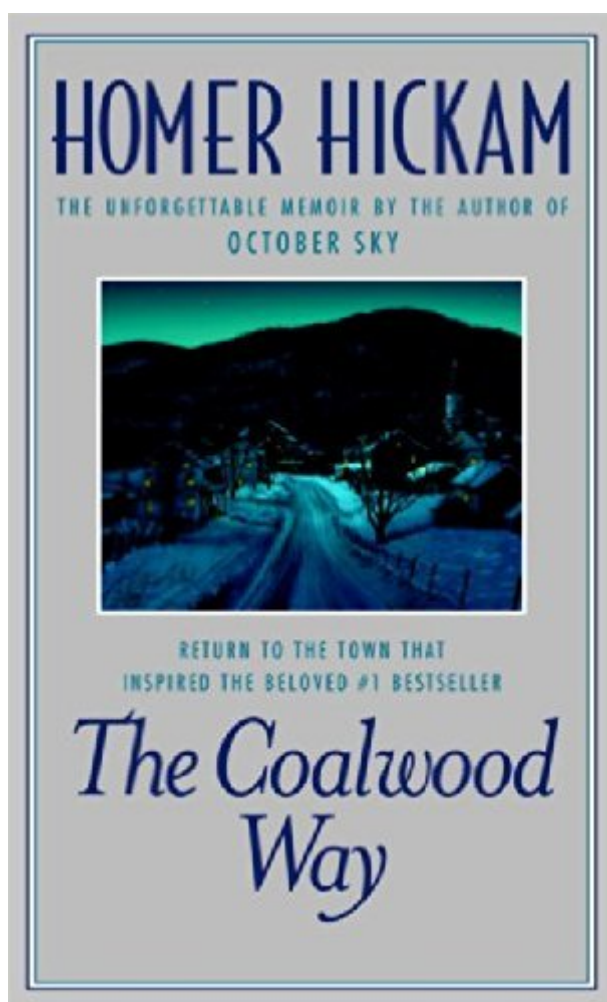


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# The Coalwood Way: A Memoir



## Synopsis

From the #1 bestselling author of *October Sky* comes this rich, unforgettable tale. With the same dazzling storytelling that distinguished his first memoir, Homer Hickam takes us deeper into the soul of his West Virginia hometown at a moment when its unique way of life is buffeted by forces of time and change. It is fall 1959. Homer "Sonny" Hickam and his fellow Rocket Boys are in their senior year at Big Creek High, and the town of Coalwood finds itself at a painful crossroads. The strains can be felt within the Hickam home, where Homer Sr. struggles to save the mine, and his wife, Elsie, is feeling increasingly isolated from both her family and the townspeople. Sonny, despite a blossoming relationship with a local girl, finds his own mood darkened by an unexplainable sadness. Then, with the holidays approaching, trouble at the mine and the arrival of a beautiful young outsider bring unexpected changes in both the Hickam family and the town of Coalwood ... as this luminous memoir moves toward its poignant conclusion.

## Book Information

Mass Market Paperback: 400 pages

Publisher: Island Books; 1st edition (September 4, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0440237165

ISBN-13: 978-0440237167

Product Dimensions: 4.3 x 0.9 x 7 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (110 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #594,590 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #329 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Regional U.S. > South](#) #1182 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Scientists](#) #3552 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Arts & Literature > Authors](#)

## Customer Reviews

If you enjoyed Homer Hickam's *Rocket Boys* or the movie *October Sky*, this book is for you. Homer doesn't so much pick up where he left off at the end of *Rocket Boys*, but rather returns to the fullness of his senior high school year. He weaves a tapestry that provides detail in breadth and depth that keeps the pages turning. You'll suddenly discover it's well past bedtime and you are content to keep reading. Homer discovers truths about himself and others, even as he's about to move away from home. There is always more to learn from one's parents. There are many emotional highs and lows in Coalwood, but lessons learned from both will leave you feeling hopeful

for the human spirit. The people of Coalwood continue to display a dogged determination to get through the difficulties, even if they stumble along the way. Not one to cry easily, I found my eyes welling up with tears during the last chapter. It is possible to find great joy and beauty in hard times. Homer doesn't miss on emotion. There's anger, joy, fear, excited anticipation, sorrow, laughter, and contentment. You may very well learn something about yourself while reading *The Coalwood Way*. I highly recommend it!

While not as lyrical as *"Rocket Boys,"* Homer Hickam still tells an engrossing tale in his new memoir, *"The Coalwood Way."* The same people we grew to love are here: Sonny, Elsie and Homer; the Rev. "Little" Richard; Quentin, Roy Lee and all the Coalwood boys. But instead of focusing on his rocketing exploits, Hickam delves into the psyche of a town that's changing in ways it doesn't even know. This is less a story about Homer Hickam than it is a story about Coalwood, West Virginia. As readers, we're richer for the experience. With the clear eye of a scientist, Hickam focuses on two watershed events in the Christmas of 1959. One delves into the undercurrent of spite and envy that marred his beloved hometown. The other shows a proud man, Homer's father, feverishly working to save his town the only way he knows how -- in the mine. But even that battle has unintended consequences. The book starts a little slowly and the ending seems a little contrived. But it must ring true, or Homer's mother surely would have called him on it. And these are minor flaws in an otherwise excellent story. As someone who lives in West Virginia but didn't grow up here, I never will fully appreciate Homer Hickam's world. But as one who loves the Mountain State and wants to see it thrive, I thank Hickam for sharing Coalwood with the rest of us. Homer Hickam has a message for the Mountain State: Honor the legacy of coal, but let it go. Education and a refusal to quit will take you wherever you wish to go. If those of us he left behind work hard enough, we can make our dreams come true -- without leaving our West Virginia hills.

Homer Hickam has done it again!! I loved *Rocket Boys* so much and didn't think it could happen again. Then along came *The Coalwood Way*!! This is a marvelous book about life. Homer takes the reader on a journey to a time when lives and times were changing, not always for the best. The author shows us a picture of a coal town and the Country in a period of transition, much like Sonny and his friends in their period of transition from high school, stepping into their future. The story tells us that no matter how bright or strong or motivated someone is, that life can throw some hard curve balls, and it is always good to know that you can count on family, friends and neighbors. Mr. Hickam also points out the importance of looking out for each other and knowing when it is time to step up to

the plate for others. The story ends with a brilliant Christmas scene that really tells the reader that we are a wondrous creation molded by all the experiences in our lives, those that happen to us and those that we initiate ourselves and that always, always, the Creator's hand is with us. That he can do all this in "The Coalwood Way" without once being preachy is unique. This was an inspiring book, that takes real life examples and attempts to draw the readers along to look at the big picture of life. This book was fun, humorous, introspective, open, honest and very touching. I enjoyed it immensely.

In a time when so much that is published and shown in the media is negative and inconsequential, 'The Coalwood Way' uplifts the spirit with the honest reflections of a young man who discovers the secret of growing up. Homer Hickam reveals the deepest longing of his heart as the book carries the reader through a short but significant period of time that changes his life. Homer's heartwarming self-searching is so reflective of what I experienced as a teen that I'm certain that many others can also relate to his story. The Coalwood Way is not a sequel to Rocket Boys but rather an 'equal' that enlarges upon the relationships and complex personalities of the characters in the town. Homer (who is as sincere and nice as he comes across in the story, and is married to ones of the most beautiful and talented ladies around) seems to unroll the story like a red carpet, encouraging the reader to follow and explore the richness of this coal mining community in southern WV. My husband, daughter and I have visited Coalwood several times and spent time with the gracious people who live there and who are working so hard to bring restoration to this gem of a town. There is a proud spirit among the citizens and that rare closeness that the word 'community' stands for. The reader of Homer's Coalwood books are able to experience this spirit. If you are wondering what exactly Homer means by 'The Coalwood Way' I encourage you to read the book. It's one of those 'life lessons' we need to share with our kids, model ourselves, and encourage in others. Warm, rich, uplifting, thoughtful, and engrossing. It's a rare treat to find an author like Homer who writes with consistent integrity and unashamed joy. I'm so thankful he is working on a third book and can hardly wait to read it!

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