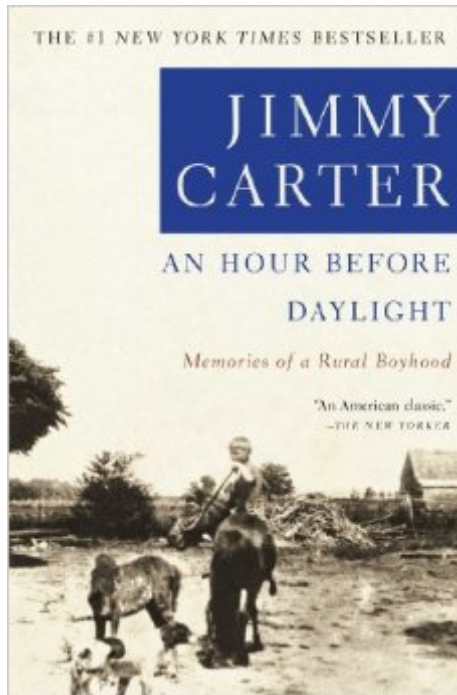


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An Hour Before Daylight: Memories Of A Rural Boyhood



Synopsis

In *An Hour Before Daylight*, Jimmy Carter, bestselling author of *Living Faith* and *Sources of Strength*, recreates his Depression-era boyhood on a Georgia farm before the civil rights movement forever changed it and the country. Carter writes about the powerful rhythms of countryside and community in a sharecropping economy, offering an unforgettable portrait of his father, a brilliant farmer and a strict segregationist who treated black workers with respect and fairness; his strong-willed and well-read mother; and the five other people who shaped his early life, three of whom were black. Carter's clean and eloquent prose evokes a time when the cycles of life were predictable and simple and the rules were heartbreaking and complex. In his singular voice and with a novelist's gift for detail, Jimmy Carter creates a sensitive portrait of an era that shaped the nation and recounts a classic, American story of enduring importance.

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Customer Reviews

I never really knew the president until I read the book. It provided insight and valuable understanding into the development of his ideals and lifelong commitment to community. Every night as I tucked my three darling sons into bed, we would cast aside Harry Potter for *Hour Before Daylight*. What a wonderful way to share our history with the family.

I couldn't put it down...What a remarkable life Jimmy Carter has led, and what rough times people had during the Depression. I really enjoyed other books by Jimmy Carter, but I think this one is my

favorite. I'm very glad he became President of the U.S....he is a man of character.

Had this engaging and conversational journey through President Carter's early days in Archer, Georgia been published prior to his '76 campaign, Americans would have understood better the thinking of the man they were to elect that year. Was his earnestness and honesty so surprising? This narrative strolls the reader through the gritty, but innocent, formative years of one of our country's most respected leaders. A personal tribute to a place and the people that this man loves the most, the reader will find themselves enveloped in the minutiae of neighborhood scuttlebutt, hog slaughtering, Depression era agricultural economics, and of the (then) easy bigotry of the Deep South. The author lauds the passing of evils of the time and examines his own anxieties about the future of his family's generational farming heritage. As a Georgian and as an American, I was delighted and entertained by President Carter's honesty and humor once again. Entertaining for all ages and a great introduction to rural life for young people. A fun & easy weekend read!

"An Hour Before Daylight" is a fascinating view into the upbringing of one of America's most unlikely Presidents. Growing up in the rural south (is that an oxymoron for the 1930's south?) is about as far removed from the beltway as anyplace I can imagine. Carter presents to the reader that the values that he took to the presidency he acquired while growing up in a farm in central Georgia - mainly: hard work, personal responsibility, and an appreciation of diversity. Yet, while the story itself is intriguing, the presentation is somewhat lacking. The book is repetative and the dialog is somewhat stilted. Carter makes the same points over and over and retells some of the same stories. One has the sense that Uncle Carter is telling us youngin's how it really was in them olden days while at the same time obviously pining for a time when the world seemed simpler. Overall, the tone of this book reminded me a lot of John Grisham's "A Painted House," a novel that I highly recommend.

This book is one of the best you'll read this year, guaranteed. It's a glimpse into the former President's youth, a life which was never easy, but never one that was complained about. Rather than writing a diatribe railing against growing up without having been born with the silver spoon found in so many of the other Presidents' mouths, Mr. Carter explores and celebrates the small trials he faced and which, eventually, molded him into the man who became President. "Angela's Ashes" as written from Georgia? Why not? This book makes an outstanding gift, if only to yourself!

I can't help wonder what some of the descendents of sharecroppers would think about Mr. Carter's book. It is evident that Mr. Carter is a decent and sincere man, embarrassed by the treatment of the black and less fortunate community in his time. His family was perhaps more caring and conscientious in their treatment of their sharecroppers than other families, but the system to keep the sharecroppers "in their place" was evidently firmly ensconced in their society. It would be interesting to look at the story from the sharecropper's perspective. But the book is not intended to be from the sharecropper's perspective, and I am impressed by the candor and openness of our former President. I do not think the audio version is necessary to "hear" the story. The descriptions and tales of life in rural Georgia are portrayed with a remarkable reality. I could see it, feel it, and taste it-but that might have something to do with my memories as a child on a farm in southeastern Georgia. Although the descriptions are fascinating and the stories are interesting, I rate Mr. Carter's memoir with a 3. The descriptive style is sometimes tedious and boring, and the stories are from a limited perspective. While Mr. Carter honestly acknowledges his own humanity and is open about personal failings, the tone frequently is pious and condescending. Perhaps that is what a memoir is...and is the reason I prefer biographies to autobiographies.

This is the book that every baby boomer and Generation X-er should be required to read. Jimmy Carter provides a wonderfully vivid tale of southern rural depression life. The Carters and their neighbors were, by today's standard, fairly poor. They lived off the land, went barefoot most of the time, had no air conditioning and television. When they needed to go to town, most of the time their feet was the mode of transportation. As a child, the future president sold boiled peanuts on the streets of Plains, Ga,. He picked cotton, slaughtered hogs, milked cows, plowed fields, ate possum. In short, Jimmy Carter's early life was a hard one. Relatively speaking, however, the Carter's were wealthy, especially when compared to the destitute black sharecroppers and day workers who farmed their land. Carter's beautifully written book should serve as a reminder to us all how easy it is to take life's 21st Century comforts for granted and how soft and privileged the American middle class really is. He helped me understand the world in which my father grew up and also made me proud of my country that someone with the humble beginnings of a Jimmy Carter could still be elected president.

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