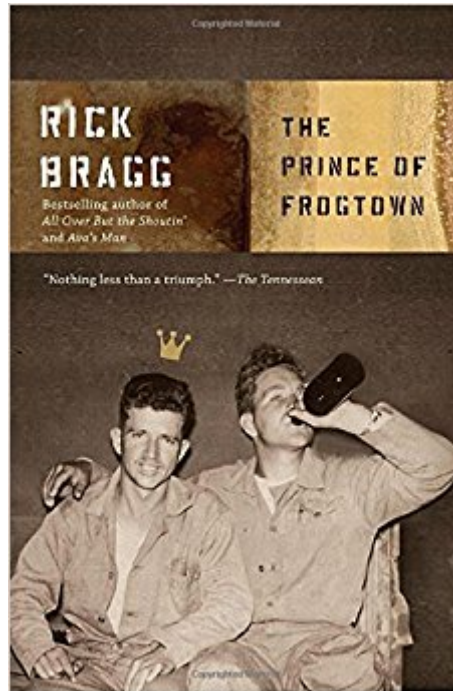


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# The Prince Of Frogtown



## Synopsis

The final volume of Rick Bragg's bestselling and beloved American saga documents a mesmerizing journey back in time to the lush Alabama landscape of Rick's youth, to Jacksonville's one-hundred-year-old mill and to Rick's father, the troubled, charismatic hustler coming of age in its shadow. Inspired by Rick Bragg's love for his stepson, *The Prince of Frogtown* also chronicles his own journey into fatherhood, as he learns to avoid the pitfalls of his forebearers. With candor, insight, and tremendous humor, Bragg seamlessly weaves these luminous narrative threads together and delivers an unforgettable rumination about fathers and sons.

## Book Information

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: Vintage; First Edition edition (April 7, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1400032687

ISBN-13: 978-1400032686

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.8 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 158 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #143,857 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #59 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Regional U.S. > South](#) #88 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Sociology > Rural](#) #273 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Journalists](#)

## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Bragg (*All Over but the Shoutin'*) continues to mine his East Alabama family history for stories, this time focusing on the life of his alcoholic father. Unlike his previous two memoirs, Bragg merges his father's history of severe hardships and simple joys with a tale from the present: his own relationship with his 10-year-old stepson. Bragg crafts flowing sentences that vividly describe the southern Appalachian landscape and ways of life both old and new. The title comes from his father, who grew up in the mill village in Jacksonville, Ala., a dirt-poor neighborhood known as Frogtown, a place where they didn't bother to name the streets, but simply assigned letters. His father's story walks the line between humorous and heartbreaking, mixing tales of tipping over outhouses as a child and stealing an alligator from a roadside show in Florida with the stark tragedies of drunkenness, brawling, dog fighting, chain gangs, meanness and his early death from tuberculosis. Juxtaposed with vignettes about Bragg's stepson, this memoir has great perspective

as the reader sees Bragg, the son of a dysfunctional father who grew up very poor, grapple with becoming the father of a modern-day mama's boy. This book, much like his previous two memoirs, is lush with narratives about manhood, fathers and sons, families and the changing face of the rural South. (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Adult/High School — Bragg revisits his Alabama hometown for the third time, following *All Over but the Shoutin'* (1998) and *Ava's Man* (2002, both Vintage). He attempts to retell the story of his father, vilified as an abusive drunk in the earlier works, and gives him a more in-depth treatment in an effort to determine what made him the way he was. While by no means sympathetic, the portrayal shows readers a man who had limited choices in education, employment, relationships, and, ultimately, behavior. Before he became an absent father, Charles Bragg was a good son; a handsome man with a sexy car; a fighter and carouser, and eventually a mean, spiteful drunk. Described through recollections of friends and relatives who knew him when, the figure who emerges coped the only way he knew how, with exaggerated machismo, in a small town that he never left for any length of time. The author's realization that he might have been harsh in his previous memoirs comes through as he views his new 10-year-old stepson as soft. Even with all the benefits of education and a Pulitzer Prize, that seed of the immature Bragg tough guy remains. The story unfolds in alternating chapters, shorter ones about the stepson interspersed with longer ones about Charles Bragg. The stepson stories have a '40s-something navel-gazing quality about them that could put off some teens, but most of the book, masterfully told, is the kind of dysfunctional family memoir that teens tend to love. — Jamie Watson, Harford County Public Library, MD Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This series was a very emotional read for me. The father was nothing like mine. My dad was a very loving man who was emotional abused by my mother. Why he lived with her for more than 50 years I will never know. I guess he loved her more than he loved himself. I struggle with the love I feel for my mother because she has always rejected me and has clung to my younger brother and an older sister who died when she was 9 months old. My brother and I never got along & after my father died I had no contact with either my mother or brother for a number of years. My brother died and I called to see if I could go to his funeral but my mother did not return my call and I did not go. Shortly after his death her older sister was very sick and her family called to let me know. This was the first time

in years any family members had contacted me because they were afraid of my mother's reaction. Days before my aunt died my mother & I would be present at the same time and she never spoke to me. It was only at my aunt's funeral that she said I was all she had left and she guessed she needed me. Things were peaceful for a couple of years but she gradually became more and more controlling and I was forced to walk away for my own sanity. Now I struggle constantly because I feel the loss so profoundly. The loss is not the reality of our relationship but what I wish it was. Reading these books, listening to others talking about their mothers, looking at my husband's relationship with his mother just makes it so much worse. I relate to Mr. Bragg on so many levels but not the deep, profound love he shares with his mother. We both grew up poor in the south. My parents both worked in textile factories, alcohol was a large part of my family and I often had to fight to fit in. This series spoke to my heart in many ways. I am very glad I was introduced to his writing.

I've enjoyed *All Over but the Shoutin'* and *Ava's Man*, and I enjoy most of Bragg's contributions to *Southern Living*, but *The Prince of Frogtown* came up short compared to the other two. However, let me be quick to point out that the fact that my father was also an alcoholic may have colored some of my perception, yet, having said that, I still have concerns about the book. The first one is that if you've read the two previous books in this trilogy there is some repeated material, and without the repeated material I'm not sure how many chapters there would be. The second thing is that there is significant historical background on Northern Alabama (and the surrounding regions) quoted from other sources - I question whether the volume of this material was helpful to the story line, they represent long detours. If they are meant as an apologetic for how people lived and died, as an explanation of their culture, I think the reader would have been better served by inserting historical background into the unfolding narrative rather than having to digest it in large chunks. A third thing that I wonder about is Bragg's account of his interaction with his stepson - on the one hand it is heartwarming, but on the other hand I have to wonder if Bragg isn't overplaying the whole redneck thing - I don't mind it in his short articles, but I wonder if he isn't protesting a bit too much in this book. Bragg is a great storyteller, no question about it, but the adult redneck persona is hard for me to accept in this volume. And yet, if you are from an alcoholic family, especially if you have a parent who is an alcoholic, you can't help but relate to Bragg and sympathize with him on his quest to redeem his Dad - that is the story line - it is a story of gleams of light shut out by darkness, of occasional hope crushed with despair - and it is this story that makes the book worth reading. How many of us have loved (or wanted to love) someone whose life has been lived in ruin, and we've searched for just one redeeming element, one bright spot, one thing that man or woman has done

to make his or her life worthwhile? We also look for a potential turning point, something that could have gone either way, so that we can say, "What if?" If you have alcoholism in your family you'll probably relate to this book; if you have other messed-up elements in your family you may also relate to Bragg's quest. If your family is perfect and you'd like to see how the rest of us live - this is the book for you.

Wonderful book. A no brainer if you are a fan of Rick Bragg, being a memoir of his relationship with his father. But even if you are not a Bragg fan put it on your reading list if you enjoy Southern writing at it's best. Being raised a Southerner is a plus because Bragg will allude to aspects of the culture not often seen elsewhere, but it will also provide insights into Southern culture, especially males of the "New South" for those with different backgrounds.

Once again, I thoroughly enjoy the writings of Rick Bragg. Takes me to a world I can't get enough of in the South. There were very hard times that he writes about but you can't help but be drawn in by the fierce loyalty the family had for each other. I lived in the Pacific Northwest during this time and I wasn't aware of what it was like so far away. This gives me understanding of another way of life and the awe I have of their endurance during the worst possible times.

The heart, soul and raw emotions that Rick Bragg put (of himself) into this book kept me emotionally engaged. This is a tribute to fatherhood, how love can conquer even the hardest and most painful times. He illustrated so artfully and lovingly the gravity of fatherhood through his personal experience as well as through the eyes of people who knew Rick's father. He did it with humor, honesty and his gift of his Southern state of mind. I can't get enough of his story-telling!

Rick Bragg is an undeniably talented writer. His insight and 'turn of phrase' is masterful and I enjoy his 'voice'. Unfortunately, this work never really 'got off the ground' for me. For those of us who enjoy eloquently expressed thoughts in beautiful sentences, Mr. Bragg certainly delivers. For those of us who also prefer some sort of 'arc' to the story, the author leaves us hanging. In fairness, perhaps that is to be expected when reading a very personal account of one's father and his effect on the writer's life. Having read Bragg's "Ava's Man" and "All Over But the Shoutin", I could have very easily skipped this book. But you decide for yourself!

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