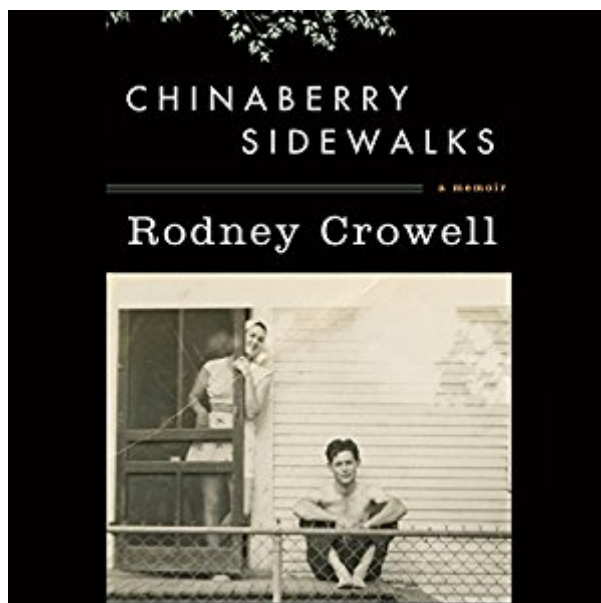


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# Chinaberry Sidewalks



## Synopsis

From the acclaimed musician comes a tender, surprising, and often uproarious memoir about his dirt-poor southeast Texas boyhood. The only child of a hard-drinking father and a Holy Roller mother, Rodney Crowell was no stranger to bombast from an early age, whether knock-down-drag-outs at a local dive bar or fire-and-brimstone sermons at Pentecostal tent revivals. He was an expert at reading his father's mercurial moods and gauging exactly when his mother was likely to erupt, and even before he learned to ride a bike, he was often forced to take matters into his own hands. He broke up his parents raucous New Year's Eve party with gunfire and ended their slugfest at the local drive-in (actual restaurants weren't on the Crowell's menu) by smashing a glass pop bottle over his own head. Despite the violent undercurrents always threatening to burst to the surface, he fiercely loved his epilepsy-racked mother, who scorned boring preachers and improvised wildly when the bills went unpaid. And he idolized his blustering father, a honky-tonk man who took his boy to see Hank Williams, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, and Johnny Cash perform live, and bought him a drum set so he could join his band at age eleven. Shot through with raggedy friends and their neighborhood capers, hilariously awkward adolescent angst, and an indelible depiction of the bloodlines Crowell came from, *Chinaberry Sidewalks* also vividly re-creates Houston in the fifties: a rough frontier town where icehouses sold beer by the gallon on paydays; teeming with musical venues from standard roadhouses to the Magnolia Gardens, where name-brand stars brought glamour to a place starved for it; filling up with cheap subdivisions where blue-collar day laborers could finally afford a house of their own; a place where apocalyptic hurricanes and pest infestations were nearly routine.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have loved Rodney Crowell since hearing his 1st album, and before I knew who he was on Emmylou's earliest albums. I found his memoir funny, sad, loving & touching, much like his music. Sometimes so open and honest, auto correct suggested horney for honest, lol & yes that too in his descriptions of his constant pursuit of girl's as a teenager & college drop out. I was surprised the Book ended so quickly, perhaps because I wasn't ready or done reading his word's. He's as honest and funny as much of his song's suggest. I loved reading his story of his crazy mom & dad, they remind me of my own wacky family. I would have liked more about Roseanne Cash and his wonderful relationship with his beloved father-in-law Johnny Cash, but I respect his careful way of keeping their story private. A good read for me from one of my all- time favourite musicians.

Excellently written. Mr. Crowell has a way of expressing things that really puts you there with what he is sharing. His only child blue collar upbringing was much like mine here in Texas which made it very easy to feel as though I fit right in with his world. The vocabulary is so just perfect for the period of time he is writing about ----- such great description of times, places and music of the period ----- really perfect. A real picture of a real family and American life. Chinaberry Sidewalks you will not want to stop reading. Definitely not dull and every page is full of the author's sharing of honesty, adventure, sadness, struggle, talent and all that comes with life. This is my first review and am doubtful as to what kind of influence I have given to the book that has become one of my favorites. Chinaberry Sidewalks is sitting right beside Liar's Club by Mary Karr. If you enjoy one you will enjoy the other.

Being a long-time Rodney Crowell fan, I was excited to read his memoir. I've always loved his songwriting, so I assumed I would enjoy his prose just as much. I was a bit leery, however, since I'd read that the memoir didn't talk about his music career. Wow! This book captured me from the first chapter. In every story he told, I was there. He captures the moments; the feelings, the sights, the smells, even, of every childhood memory. Many people, if they choose to admit it, will relate to the dysfunction of his parents' relationship, and thus, the dysfunction of the entire household. The fears, the sometimes disgust, the need to have a parent BE a parent. I don't mean to convey that this book is a downer. It's just the opposite. It's often very funny, and it ultimately portrays the reconciliation

that occurred between Rodney and his parents, and the mutual understanding and love that prevailed. I didn't want to let this book go. I was sad when I finished it. I wished there were more stories to tell, of these fascinating, flawed people.

This book brought back so many memories of what it was like living in the 50's, 60's & 70's. Especially the areas I grew up in- GalenaPark, JacintoCity, Channelview etc. Definitely a very good book to read. I never knew Rodney Crowell lived in JacintoCity, Texas. Loved this book.

That Rodney Crowell is multi-talented has never been a well-kept secret, but who knew that his gift extended to such an excellent degree as an author? From western Ky myself, and accustomed to hearing many localisms, metaphors, I learned some hilarious new ones and I especially enjoyed reading those he attributes to his father. Having visited frequently an older sis who resided in Pasadena during the era of which he writes, I had no problem recognizing Rodney's description of that area in east Texas. If Rodney's goal was to cause the reader to fall in love with his little family (including all their warts), and to reminiscence about one's own childhood neighborhood, he was more than successful. Buy it! Read it! You will 'feel it' and you will appreciate his honesty!!!

Someone close to Rodney intrigued me into buying this book by noting the "violence in that culture, the sharecropping culture." Not only the culture, but also the Crowell family's overall violent mindset. Parts of Rodney's journey reminded me of my own, fist-fighting my way thru grade and high school. But Rodney's life was more desperate than mine and some of his experiences are fueled with an anger from his circumstances that suggest an edge all too many do not survive. How this man emerged from that to become the sensitive, intuitive songwriter he is today is open to question. Living on the edge does not guarantee one will transcend it to a higher place; most simply die there. And Crowell came close to death more than once. While this is a fascinating read, its verbosity is rough on the comprehension in spots, both due to the story being told and to the syntax Crowell sometimes employs. Often I found myself having to re-read heavily packed sentences to connect the dots and grasp the central message. But that's a small complaint compared to the page-turning story within its pages. I've always respected Crowell's songwriting, now I have something else to respect him for. I hope this won't be his only book. He is clearly an insightful and entertaining writer.

I bought the book because of the title, and because my family lived in Crosby when the author did. He might even remember my siblings. I've appreciated his song-writing/story telling for a long time. I

was not disappointed with his prose. This memoir offers an entertaining view into what childhood was like for blue collar families on the Texas Gulf coast, post WWII.

I like Rodney Crowell especially when he sings with Emmy Lou Harris. This is his backstory. Good read.

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