



Farewell: A Memoir of a Texas Childhood

Horton Foote

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For more than five decades, Horton Foote, "the Chekhov of the small town," has chronicled with compassion and acuity the changes in American life -- both intimate and universal. His adaptation of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and his original screenplay *Tender Mercies* earned him Academy Awards. He received an Indie Award for Best Writer for *The Trip to Bountiful* and a Pulitzer Prize for *The Young Man from Atlanta*.

In his plays and films, Foote has returned over and over again to Wharton, Texas, where he was born and where he lives, once again, in the house in which he grew up. Now for the first time, in *Farewell*, Foote turns to prose to tell his own story and the stories of the real people who have inspired his characters.

He was the first child of his generation of Footes, born into an extended family of aunts, great-aunts, grandparents and dozens of cousins once removed, all of whom discovered that even as a young boy Foote was an avid listener with an uncanny ability to extract a story -- including those deemed unfit for children. Foote's memories are of a time when going down to meet the train was an event whether or not you knew someone on it, when black and white children played together until segregation forced them apart at school-age.

Foote beautifully maintains the child's-eye view, so that we gradually discover, as did he, that something was wrong with his Brooks uncles, that none of them proved able to keep a job or stay married or quit drinking.

We see his growing understanding of all sorts of trouble -- poverty, racism, injustice, marital strife, depression and fear. His memoir is both a celebration of the immense importance of community in our earlier history and evidence that even a strong community cannot save a lost soul.

In all of Foote's writing, he reveals the immense drama behind quiet lives, or as Frank Rich has said, "the unbearable turbulence beneath a tranquil surface." *Farewell* is as deeply moving as the best of Foote's writing for film and theater, and a gorgeous testimony to his own faith in the human spirit.

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