



The Mourners' Bench: How God Saved An Illiterate Sinner Like Me

Aron Seaborn

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Growing up wasn't easy for Aron Seaborn, the second oldest son of Northampton county sharecroppers. Despite an intense desire to attend school, Aron was relegated to child servitude to help sustain his growing family. At the age of six, Aron had to forego reading, writing and arithmetic to plow a mule alongside his older brother and father in the menacing elements of the North Carolina summers and winters. He quickly learned that survival trumped studies. Subsequently, the lessons he learned as a child were a result of the harsh realities of segregated life in a small North Carolina township. He didn't go to school. He never learned to read or write. Having completed only kindergarten, Aron vowed to one day live a better life and finish what he started. At the age of sixteen, he was given an opportunity that forever altered his life. He went from poverty to the working class. Going back to school took a backseat yet again to paying taxes and rent. In his late twenties, Aron started his own businesses, which he operated successfully more than thirty years, without ever knowing how to read or write. The Mourners' Bench takes you back in time and gives you an intimate look into the life of a man who, despite hardships and disadvantages, achieves a modicum of success many learned individuals fall short of. While Aron's life is not unique in the sense that many black men in mid-century America were illiterate, it is unique in lieu of the fact that he achieved an impressive level of success without traditional education. He learned at the hand of a mule, bad decisions and his father's thick leather belt. The Mourners' Bench is a rich, sometimes painful history lesson, with harsh realities interwoven between the pages. It is a delicate read. The author's naivety shows up without expressed permission--his anger never acknowledged but acutely sensed. But his life is also a master class in redemption, joyfully and triumphantly played out chapter by chapter. A must read for all ages.

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