



My Grandfather's Son

Clarence Thomas

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Provocative, inspiring, and unflinchingly honest, *My Grandfather's Son* is the story of one of America's most remarkable and controversial leaders, Supreme Court justice Clarence Thomas, told in his own words.

Thomas was born in rural Georgia on June 23, 1948, into a life marked by poverty and hunger. His parents divorced when Thomas was still a baby, and his father moved north to Philadelphia, leaving his young mother to raise him and his brother and sister on the ten dollars a week she earned as a maid. At age seven, Thomas and his six-year-old brother were sent to live with his mother's father, Myers Anderson, and her stepmother in their Savannah home. It was a move that would forever change Thomas's life.

His grandfather, whom he called "Daddy," was a black man with a strict work ethic, trying to raise a family in the years of Jim Crow. Thomas witnessed his grandparents' steadfastness despite injustices, their hopefulness despite bigotry, and their deep love for their country. His own quiet ambition would propel him to Holy Cross and Yale Law School, and eventually—despite a bitter, highly contested public confirmation—to the highest court in the land. In this candid and deeply moving memoir, a quintessential American tale of hardship and grit, Clarence Thomas recounts his astonishing journey for the first time, and pays homage to the man who made it possible.

Intimately and eloquently, Thomas speaks out, revealing the pieces of his life he holds dear, detailing the suffering and injustices he has overcome, including the acrimonious and polarizing Senate hearing involving a former aide, Anita Hill, and the depression and despair it created in his own life and the lives of those closest to him. *My Grandfather's Son* is the story of a determined man whose faith, courage, and perseverance inspired him to rise up against all odds and achieve his dreams.

My Grandfather's Son Details

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From Reader Review My Grandfather's Son for online ebook

Marvin Watts says

One of my heroes, a man who had to struggle for what he wanted to achieve. He didn't blame others for whatever mistakes he may have made. He took personal responsibility for them. It was a shame what his enemies put him through, but he's a Supreme Court justice.

Jennifer says

I really enjoyed this book. If someone had asked me a month ago if I would like to read Thomas' autobiography, I would have looked at them like they were crazy! :)

But, I saw him interviewed recently on EWTN by Raymond Arroyo and I was stunned by how humble and self-effacing this Supreme Court justice was. In 1991, when he was confirmed to the SC, I was newly married and politically naive. I pretty much thought Anita Hill was a poor victim to this brutal man...just what the media wanted me to believe.

The focus of this lovely book is Thomas' love and gratitude towards his grandparents who raised him and ultimately made him the man he is today. I love good anecdotal stories and this one is full of them. Thomas' childhood from his birth, to moving in (at age 6) with his grandparents carrying all his belongings in a paper grocery sack, to attending Yale Law School, all these events are told with an eye to detail and with a brutal honesty. He does talk A LOT about the challenges of his race and how it has affected his life and that of his family. The extra challenges he faced because of the color of his skin were real yet he was raised by his grandfather to accept the challenges and work hard to overcome them, if possible.

Thomas doesn't pussy-foot around with his opinions but always comes across as being as fair and honest as he can in his opinions. You can tell from his writing that he is a devout Catholic Christian--no calumny going on here. But, he does tell you how disappointed he is in some government officials who did not keep their word--he names them--I like that kind of honesty.

Ultimately, I am very grateful to have a man like Clarence Thomas sitting on our country's highest court--Enough said--go read it!

jimstoic says

My Constitutional Law professor loaned this to me. I found it interesting. There's actually a lot inspiring about Justice Thomas's story. Unfortunately it's told with a lack of self awareness. For example, here's his description of a meeting with Women Employed (p. 165):

"About a hundred mostly white women showed up. They gave every impression of being successful, and judging by the questions they asked me, they were smart and sophisticated as well. Yet I couldn't understand how angry they seemed to be about their lot in life."

The same adjectives apply to Thomas. He is as successful as a human being can be, yet, if the book is any indication, he remains seething with resentment.

And there are inconsistencies. He admits that he drank so much that he couldn't honestly say whether he'd ever used illicit drugs (p. 221), but he criticizes his opponents for accusing him of abusing drugs (p. 264). The fact that he acknowledges being so drunk that he can't remember what he did calls into question denials of anything that happened during the period when he was drinking.

Still, I started with a more negative impression than I ended with. I've ordered Anita Hill's memoir. It will be interesting to compare them.

Kent says

Thomas tells the story of his life from his childhood in Pinpoint, GA, to his first days as Supreme Court Justice. He credits above all his maternal grandfather, "Daddy," with making him the man that he is today. When his mother could not care for him and his brother, they came into the home of and under the law of "Daddy," a man who was tough, rigid, unyielding, rode his grandsons hard and pushed them to excellence, but certainly not with compliments and platitudes. Steps along the way for Thomas included Catholic school, Catholic seminary, Yale Law School (a mis-step according to Thomas), working for John Danforth in the MO D.A.'s office, working for Monsanto, then for, successively, Sen. John Danforth in D.C. and the Dept. of Education under Pres. Reagan. Then he became director of the mismanaged EEOC, an organization he was able to turn around. Under Pres. Bush he became a federal judge and then, of course, a Supreme Court justice.

The opening chapters are fascinating as Thomas relates his poverty, his life in racist GA, and his relationship with his grandfather, "the greatest man I ever knew." I've contemplated having my girls read these opening chapters just to help them step in someone else's shoes from that era.

What's surprising and endearing about this autobiography is the author's vulnerability, his free admission of his failures (including his first marriage) and doubts along the way. (By the way, Anita Hill was not one of his failures. He denies all the allegations she made against him. The FBI dismissed them, too, after they investigated them, before they were leaked to the press.)

I've always had a deep respect for Justice Thomas, probably borne of the trials he endured during his Supreme Court hearings. And I've always had a special interest in him for the odd reason that he is one of a very few with whom I share a birthday.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_y6H6...

Rohit Sudarshan says

Painful and poignant, Clarence Thomas' memoir very much made me feel the intense bigotry of segregated Georgia but also the intolerance of the Catholic Church and the prejudice of elite institutions. In laying bare its impact on his psyche, Thomas makes himself remarkably vulnerable in ways that few powerful people are willing to do. He describes the feeling of shame at being called ABC (America's Blackest Child) by his African American childhood peers and the hateful eyes and slurs that accompanied him when he left home and found himself as the only African American in social and professional settings. Perhaps the most memorable example at his sensitivity to the unfair treatment he received was by a mentor that sought to correct his manner of speech. Even though he acknowledges the good intentions of his mentor, Thomas says that it has continued to make him shy to speak in public. This puts his silence on the bench, a point for which

he is frequently mocked, in a very different light.

Other memoirs tend to emphasize the overcoming of adversity while Thomas focuses at length on the adversity itself and how success was not a triumph over it but rather a coping mechanism. Black conservatives often face the criticism that they deemphasize the role of systemic racism. This particular criticism cannot be leveled at Thomas. While his tone is restrained, he discusses multiple layers of racial prejudice, particularly the harmfulness of the passive indifference of his fellow students and “friends.” In fact, his attention to race is so nuanced I found myself in some agreement with his perspectives, much to my own shock. His conviction that desegregation, through the bussing of school children, harmed black families and black children by thrusting them in hostile environments, is well supported. Although I don’t believe that the program was without merits, his point that social programs and policies are too often pushed based on theory rather than attention to how it will tangibly impact people is important.

His conservative ideals seem very much to be consistent with his interest in helping the poor Georgian community that raised him as well as fellow African Americans. It was refreshing that he generally used his ideals to apply praise and criticism to other black empowerment movements. For example, he gave praise to the beliefs of growing Black Muslims because the movement, in his interpretation, preached conservative self-reliance. Having said that, there are times when his criticism of the welfare state and “handouts” feel excessive. His account of his own sister as dependent on welfare was largely disproven by a piece in the Chicago Tribune and shows Thomas to be more politically minded than he would like others to believe.

Any discussion of Clarence Thomas’ actual jurisprudence has been influenced by the Anita Hill testimony. Thomas here had an opportunity to direct some sensitivity toward her. Even if he believes her to be a pawn of pro-choice liberals that slandered him, the treatment she experienced from the Senate Judiciary Committee and members of the American public must have reminded him somewhat of the racism he also received. Like him, she was a southerner that worked hard to attend Yale and found her race to be a barrier to employment. Thomas doesn’t acknowledge any of this and merely addresses her as mediocre at her job and suggests her employment at the EEOC was a matter of personal charity. I suppose it’s to be expected that he would not reserve much favorable commentary about her, but his mentions of her exude gaslighting. It’s a contrast to the careful attention he gives to other topics.

Nate Cooley says

Justice Thomas's book, "My Grandfather's Son", was to me an enthralling and incredibly introspective story on how one of the most enigmatic public figures in our nation's recent history got to where he is today.

For a long time, Clarence Thomas has been a mystery to me (and I am sure to many others as well). In "My Grandfather's Son" though, Justice Thomas opens the shutters to his life (his words, not mine) and bares his soul. He talks openly about what it was like to be abandoned by his father and raised by his "Daddy" (his maternal grandfather). It was illuminating to read Thomas's feelings about his grandfather as he contemplated and compared his strict almost loathsome upbringing juxtaposed against his grandfather's affection for Thomas's own son, Jamal.

Thomas talks about his collegiate radicalism and the anger and rage that fueled his politics. Most impressively though, Thomas dicusses in detail the evolution of his ideology. He states that he had been "sneering at the simplemindedness of his [grandfather's] philosophy of self-reliance, but now it was making sense to [him] again." He also asked, "If I was truly serious about helping other people, I'd have started by helping myself, and the first thing I had to do was chain the beast of rage and resentment that threatened to

wreck my academic career and my life. Of course I had every reason to be outraged by the experience of blacks in America, but I had no right to confuse their collective sufferings with my own personal experiences."

Maybe that is why I enjoyed reading about Justice Thomas's life ... I realized just how much of an individual he truly is. He talked about reading "Atlas Shrugged" and "The Fountainhead" and how Ayn Rand's philosophy of Objectivism (radical individualism) seared him to his core. He realized how hollow the leftist's "Do-Your-Own-Thing" mantra truly was, labeling it superficial and strictly limited. Thomas himself stated, "Merely because I was black, it seemed, I was supposed to listen to Hugh Maskela instead of Carole King, just as I was expected to be a radical, not a conservative. I no longer cared to play that game ... The black people I knew came from different places and backgrounds - social, economic, even ethnic - yet the color of our skin was somehow supposed to make us identical in spite of our differences. I didn't buy it. Of course we had all experienced racism in one way or another, but that did not mean we had to think alike."

Thomas's conservatism does not make him an "Uncle Tom". In fact, his conservatism is an informed and thoughtful reaction to the true problems facing the African-American community. As far as I am concerned, the black community ought to revere Justice Thomas as a hero as well as other African-American individualists such as Thomas Sowell, Jay Parker, and even Juan Williams and Bill Cosby.

Some have viewed Justice Thomas's book as a personification of his bitterness. However, I believe it is much more complicated than that. It is clear from the last couple chapters that what Anita Hill did was despicable. But even more contemptible are those who put her up to it, the leftist special interest groups and women's groups. Simply put, the Anita Hill allegation was about abortion rather than sexual harassment. It is clear to me now that Thomas's assessment of Hill is undoubtedly true ... she was/is an ambitious woman marked by immaturity. Thomas states in his book that Ms. Hill touted her Yale Law degree as reason enough to qualify her for a promotion. This is noteworthy because in an October 2, 2007 editorial in the NYT written by Anita Hill she again refutes Thomas's claim that she was a below-average employee by ballyhooing again that she "had gone to Yale Law School" - as if that alone makes someone a qualified employee.

Bravo to Justice Thomas!!! He is an American Treasure. If I am ever in a Wal-mart parking lot late one night and I see a larger custom-built RV in the back corner of the lot, I may just knock on the door and shake his hand and tell him thank you to his face.

Sharon says

What an amazing story of a child born into poverty, raised in poverty by grandparents determined to give him a better life and is now serving on the Supreme Court. Honest and painful at times, Judge Thomas doesn't pull any punches about mistakes he made, yet his determination to live life for the long term inspires the reader to strive to do his best no matter what the circumstances.

Jeff Raymond says

To say that Clarence Thomas is one of the most polarizing Supreme Court justices is probably an understatement, and given that his confirmation was over 20 years ago at this point, many of us coming into politics now, or coming into it in the last decade, know very little of him outside of what is reported and what happens on the Supreme Court.

It was with some excitement (after having a copy of this book for nearly five years) and trepidation that I picked this up to read with all of that in mind. The good news is that there's a lot of good biographical information and stories in here. We get a good look at how Thomas came to be as a person, and how his childhood and education formed his work ethic. We get some flashes as to his demeanor as well, something that doesn't come across very well on the Court given his general silence. In that area, the book is very successful.

The one downside, and a major one for me, is that this book is basically apolitical. Politics come into play, for certain, but mostly as sidebars to the more important stories he's telling. If you're looking for any real insight as to his judicial philosophy or how he got there in terms of explicit legal or political reasoning, you won't find it here. You can definitely connect plenty of dots along the way, but in terms of what I think I came here to get, it just wasn't there.

This is definitely a good read, and I recommend it for any court watchers out there, but hopefully we'll get something similar to *Scalia Dissents* for Thomas sometime in the future.

Kevin Brooks says

I must say that this book is as pivotal, revolutionary and impacting as the *The Auto-Biography of Malcom-X*, a book I read in college at Grambling State University over 15 years ago. Malcom X's story had a tremendous impact on my life.

I am proud to say that this book is a must read for anyone who says that they are concerned with the plight of Black folks in America.Clarence Thomas epitomizes *The Courage TO Be* as Paul Tillich profoundly purports in his book of the same title. As I read the story of Clarence Thomas, I came to some resolution of the pain, insecurity and angry as a young Blackman in America and become inspired and motivated knowing that this brother.... Again, I say proudly----this BROTHER--has had the same thoughts, fears, concerns anger and hopes about his lot in this country. Clarence took the Bull by the Horns and rode him, received the cards that were dealt and played them, and walked the stony road barefooted and didn't say a mumbling word. He didn't say a mumbling word because he was built for it by a Grandfather who was Strong, Proud, Revered, Independent, Pro-Black, VERY BLACK(literally-an injustice that we still don't address today) and Unapologetically and Confrontationally American!

I challenge anyone who questions the notion of *How Black He Is* by examining their own personal lives compared to his contrasting the level of discipline that his grandfather fostered for the hopes of him realizing that America did not owe him anything.....better yet...American belongs to him! I felt quite stupid as I reminisced on my own bandwagon attitude as shouted the immature comments of Uncle Tom, Handkerchief Head, Boot licking, and Butt kissing NEGRO which was the common ridiculous lamentations by many of my radical and liberal Black Revolutionary friends of the past 15 years.....

Friends that are not taking care of their children, smoking weed, selling drugs, and broke from not fostering any sense of economic security for themselves. I must say that Justice Thomas "fans the smoke" and "breaks the mirrors" of those in the so-called Leaders in the Black Community who says they are for the people.

I wonder if any of these Self-Anointed Saviors for a community whom they depend on for their relevance can take the level of criticism that Brother Thomas has received for the past 10 plus years...."Every day I'm Hustling" is the mantra of the so-called Black Community today!!!!This books is prophetic critique and examination of those who are Hustling Our Communities.....Not by throwing slurs that rhyme...but by the hard work, discipline, and academic rigor that our ancestors fostered for us to be the as the standard in a country who looks at us a mediocre and disinherited.

Go Ahead Kick-Azz Tom!

Kathleen says

2.5 stars. First, the good. The opening 50 pages or so are spectacular. Justice Thomas grew up in rural poverty in tiny Pinpoint, GA. The details are fascinating, especially about how his family coped with living in a segregated society. His tales about his grandparents and their discipline (especially from his grandfather) are told so lovingly and with such heart. It's clear that Justice Thomas believes that he owes so much of his life and success to the lessons he learned from his grandfather.

But the rest...oof. I came out feeling overwhelmingly that this is not a human being who has a judicial temperament. Like, at all. At one point he said he was surprised that his temper became an issue during his judicial hearings, because he ever yelled at anyone at work. Respectfully, I think there's a bit more to a judicial temperament than just not screaming at people.

I was annoyed at his inconsistencies and rants. He had this strong view that his Yale degree was worthless because people viewed him as an affirmative action admittee. Yet he voluntarily noted his race on his application (and when he later met a black student who HADN'T, said he wished he'd done the same). Maybe some of the people hiring after Yale just didn't like his personality, ya know? He also proudly noted that he never went on welfare when poorly paid in the government, but he signed up for a law school loan repayment co-op, so other people would pay part of his loans. How is that better than going on welfare? It's a little self-serving to view yourself as better than people who get public benefits when other people are still paying part of your debts.

I also didn't believe his story of the Anita Hill situation for a second, even reading his account. She had 3 corroborating witnesses and his denials came off as self-serving and untrue to me. Definitely need to watch Confirmation next.

Overall, glad I read it, but ended feeling not reassured that Justice Thomas is on the Supreme Court. :(

Christian D. Orr says

A thoroughly readable, insightful, and informative book, that gives his first-hand insight into the life and mindset of Justice Thomas. An eye-opening look at how he overcame extreme poverty (for example, carrying all of his belongings in two grocery bags) and racism (not just from whites, but suprisingly from lighter-skinned blacks as well) during his childhood in the Jim Crow-era Deep South, the values and work ethic instilled in him by his "Daddy" (his maternal grandfather), his collegiate years as a self-described "angry black man"), his transition from left-wing militant to conservative political philosophy, and his maturation and transition into professional and public life.

Reading this book leaves me that much more impressed with the character and accomplishments of Justice Thomas, and makes me that much more disgusted with the utter thoughtlessness and hypocrisy of both black leftist groups like the NAACP (accusing him of being a "sellout," "Uncle Tom," etc.) and white liberals ("I was struck by how easy it had been for sanctimonious whites to accuse a black man of not caring about civil rights. It was as ludicrous as a well-fed man lecturing a starving person about his insensitivity to world hunger."--p. 202) alike with their personal attacks and defamation of character. Then-Senator Joe Biden comes across as particularly two-faced, and my already-low opinion of the now-Vice President of the United Sates has dropped even lower. Sen. Howard Metzenbaum comes across as a true scumbag (which re-affirms

my pre-existing opinion of him), and then of course there's the leftist media and the conniving Anita Hill.

Kudos to Clarence Thomas for overcoming all of these naysayers and obstacles in his life, and further kudos for writing such an excellent book about how he overcame. I'm not particularly fond of the Supreme Court as a whole, but I am certainly glad that Justice Thomas is one of the voices of reason and sanity sitting on that body.

Jennefer Free says

I was in college when the Senate confirmation hearings for the nomination of Clarence Thomas were taking place. It was the first time that I had become really interested in any current or political event. I became so engulfed in what to me was the apparent injustice with which he was being treated; I couldn't stop watching the hearing. I cut class for a few days so that I could participate as a spectator.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading Thomas' personal account of his life. The progression and refining which he achieved through the various stages of his life was remarkable.

While thinking back on his confirmation hearings and through reading his memoir my mind often recalled a scripture found in Malachi 3:3. "And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." Clarence Thomas became who he is today the same way that we all do - through enduring the heat of the Refiner's fire and trusting that the Refiner has a grand purpose for us through the events that life offers.

One of my favorite quotes from the book is when Thomas shares his response to Pres. Bush's introduction of him at the public swearing in ceremony: "'There have been many difficult days as we all went through the confirmation battle. But on this sunny day in October, at the White House, there is joy. Joy in the morning.' I was alluding to Psalm 30, which had brought me much comfort in recent weeks and from which a friend had suggested that I quote that day: I will praise you, LORD, for you have rescued me. You refused to let my enemies triumph over me...Weeping may go on all night, but joy comes with the morning. I had forgotten that it was possible to know such joy. Thanks to God's direct intervention, I had risen phoenixlike from the ashes of self-pity and despair..."

David says

Memoir begins with Thomas's hard-scrabble childhood and ends with his hard-fought confirmation to the U.S. Supreme Court. And yes, everything about his life to that point was HARD.

The opening material about growing up poorer-than-dirt-poor in the Jim Crow South is eye-opening and something worth reading to today's fortunate children. But his upbringing by his disciplined and determined grandparents molded his character and his faith. At times he wandered from his faith, and sometimes he drank too much, but he never wavered from his belief in America's founding values. He returned to his faith during the challenges of confirmation, and that and support from his wife and friends saw him through.

One's opinion of this memoir no doubt will be colored by one's political opinions. Someone of the leftist

persuasion will discount Thomas's account of the vicious hatred and lies intended to keep him off the court. However, approaching this story with a completely open mind will allow a reader to weigh the evidence as it comes. He seems to have many leftist friends (Ruth Bader Ginsburg, for one) who supported and believed him. I believe him.

I would be interested in a future memoir about Thomas's experience on the Supreme Court.

Annette says

This is a must read for any person who reads Thomas' SCOTUS opinions and think "WTF IS HE THINKING"? A very important back story on Justice Thomas' difficult and and poverty-stricken personal history. Raised by his grandfather to believe that personal responsibility is the ONLY way to succeed in your life, he is a true believer of the "pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps" philosophy.

His opinion in Grutter v. Bollinger (the University of Michigan/affirmative action cases) makes much more sense in light of this upbringing. Thomas spent years studying Catholicism in seminary and got accepted to Harvard Law (declined to accept admission) and Yale Law school. He states he still keeps his diploma from Yale in a box in his basement because it became very apparent that a law degree from Yale meant one thing for a white person, and another thing for a black person. (He placed a 25 cent sticker on it reflecting what he thought his degree was worth.) He opposes welfare because he saw first hand what reliance upon an "entitlement" system did to his own sister. (Is it easier to risk everything on only the possibility of success or the assured collection of a steady check?)

He spent over a decade at the EEOC turning the agency around and was a huge advocate for the disabled. He wants an EQUAL playing ground for everyone, not an imbalanced and preferential treatment for segments of society because it is impossible to live down the true or untrue thoughts that "Oh, he got ___ because he's black."

He also writes that there's nothing more dangerous than a liberal white person who takes a paternalistic approach to the "poor minority who doesn't really know what's right for themselves." He was seriously wronged in the Anita Hill fiasco and repeatedly in college and in his professional career. I can't count how many times I've seen editorial cartoons or op-eds that claim that Thomas is a traitor to his race since "he used affirmative action" to get accepted to Yale and "quotas" to get a seat on the highest court. How exactly can Thomas live that down or prove that thinking wrong?

I still am left in the dark about his dissents in the habeas corpus cases where he thinks the executive can incarcerate anyone (even US citizens). For someone who is so vocal about being oppressed by well-intentioned governmental policies, one would think Thomas would see the danger in denying habeas.

But the book clears up his dissents in 1. Gonzales v. Raich where he wanted to allow CA to proceed with the legalization of medicinal marijuana and his concurrence in 2. US v. Lopez where he said the federal government did not have authority to outlaw guns near schools and 3. US v. Morrison where he said that Congress does not have authority to pass the Violence Against Women Act. (All his opinions were based on teh old-school interpretation of the Commerce Clause.)

While I still do not agree with many of Thomas' political opinions, I have gained a greater respect for the man and a greater understanding of his beliefs.

T.E. George says

This book showed up in the mail from a book club I belong to. I didn't order it but decided why not give it a read. Of course I watched some of the senate hearings when Justice Thomas was nominated for the bench. And, in shameful honesty, I also got caught up in the soap opera of Anita Hill's testimony and Justice Thomas' response. Beyond that I admit I knew nothing about the man.

As a general rule I do not read movie reviews before going to the movies. Why should I let someone else decide for me whether I will like something based on their biases? The same can be said for My Grandfather's Son. Having read My Grandfather's Son before seeing any reviews was invaluable. I was able to meet a man I did not know. A man who was willing to reveal all the hidden nooks and crannies of his life. This is what autobiography should be. Thomas makes no effort to gloss over or ignore his own failures in life. Nor does he wallow in them. Instead, he simply tells his life story. Few of us would be nearly so willing to lay our soul on the table for others to dissect. I guess once one has endured that circus called confirmation, nothing else can seem so bad.

I now feel like I know Clarence Thomas. He is a man aware of his failings and humbled by his successes. Justice Thomas you are indeed your grandfather's son.

Todd Kruse says

Overall I enjoyed this book because I learned a great deal about Justice Thomas' childhood and his struggles with drinking and financial challenges. I had no idea of the problems he dealt with on his way to the Supreme Court but he did not 'close the loop' really on these personal struggles which leaves a reader wondering if Thomas has managed these demons.

I was left with the impression that Justice Thomas was never really at peace with himself so given his lifetime tenure on the Court as a Justice I hope he has achieved a level of inner peace and sense of accomplishment.

Martha says

“And now you know the rest of the story.”

This autobiography by Clarence Thomas is amazing. Looking at both sides now, I have to say Clarence Thomas' credibility has risen off the charts for me. Back in 1991, I watched the confirmation hearings and wondered a few times, “Wow, could he really have said these things?” even though I was rooting for him to be nominated. I did think Anita Hill sounded a little too slick, but once in a while I questioned it. While watching these hearings, I was in awe of the complete calm and coolness of Clarence Thomas through all the bashing. His admirable conduct in front of the world made me think “If he can handle this, he can handle anything on the Supreme Court, no problem.”

Now, after reading My Grandfather's Son, I am amazed at his upbringing. He certainly did not grow up with a silver spoon in his mouth! This autobiography brought me to tears, made me laugh and most importantly

let me see the whole picture of Clarence Thomas. Now, I know there are the opponents of him that scoff and swear and would never touch this book with a ten-foot pole, but I think these critics would be surprised at how he came to be the person he is today. His story is a real eye-opener and very inspiring!

In the preface of this book he stated, "I wanted to leave behind an accurate record of my own life as I remember it." I am very glad he did because he educated me about his perspective growing up in America. Loved this book, and recommend it to everyone!

Stephen says

"Only the person who takes the voyage can really talk about it."

Clarence Thomas's life is what we used to call an American Success Story. *My Grandfather's Son* details his life from being born in rural poverty to becoming an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. Thomas was abandoned by his father and, at age 9, was shipped off by his mother to be raised by her parents. After the dual assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bobby Kennedy in 1968, young Clarence's life fractured. He dropped out of the seminary, turned his back on religion, and embraced the Angry Black Man (tm) persona popular with college-aged African Americans in the early 1970's. These decisions caused a rift between him and his grandfather that was never repaired. He spent the next part of his career fighting for civil rights and to get better opportunities for minorities in America, but what he saw pushed him back to the political right instead of further to the left.

Thomas discusses with much candor subjects like the dissolving of his first marriage, his alcohol abuse, and the rift between him and his grandfather that they both tried to repair shortly before his grandfather's death. He discusses with equal joy the love he obviously feels for his second wife, his return to the Christian faith, and the gratitude he feels toward his grandparents for raising him right. In keeping with the tradition of secrecy about the Supreme Court, the book ends with Thomas being sworn in by Chief Justice William Rehnquist and the silent prayer Thomas spoke before his first conference with his fellow justices.

My Grandfather's Son would be a good, inspiring read even if it wasn't written by a justice of the Supreme Court.

Beth says

I can't say I'm terribly interested in either race or politics, so the fact that a) I sought out this book (this was following a glimpse of an interview with Justice Clarence Thomas; my father-in-law shared it with me a year ago while we were on vacation) and b) I actually enjoyed this rather compelling memoir was surprising.

Like many others of my generation (okay, I took a nonscientific poll consisting of one other person — my husband), we've heard of Clarence Thomas but knew almost nothing about him, other than this: he was a black Supreme Court justice and he was accused of sexual harassment. I was just eleven when it had been all over the news for those few months, impressionable but hardly able to process exactly what all of the slander meant or what the ultimate outcome was.

I was glad, then, that Justice Thomas wrote this memoir and I could get a more true idea of who this man

was. When I told Nathan a little about the man, he responded that he sounded like a nice guy — but nice isn't really the word I'd use. Sure, he was polite and professional. And he had done a lot of growth throughout his book, and he doesn't spin it — he matter-of-factly admits to the things in his life that he was ashamed of (sexual harassment wasn't one of them — he denies that it happened at all, and I believe him).

How would I describe Justice Thomas, then? A man who is hard-working and talented — but mostly hard-working. A man of integrity, true to his word. A man of character. I came away from this book proud that he was one of our nine justices.

And I came away from this book a little disgusted at politics and the media. It is so disappointing that people's names and reputations are permanently smeared, all in the name of democracy. Yes, we want the best people representing us and making decisions in our government — and yes, that might mean we need to learn about the negative things that might hinder their performance. But why are unrelated private details brought up and flaunted on the evening news? I couldn't help but think of the recent presidential campaign (probably because Joe Biden had been mentioned several times in this book, and consequently, my opinion of our new vice president has really diminished) and all the mud-slinging that went along with it. I think both Obama and McCain were put through the wringer, but so was Sarah Palin — and the attacks on her character were personal to her and her family. Why anyone signs up for any of this is beyond me ... but I'm glad for the honest ones who enter into the public eye, who lead with courage and conviction.

Justice Thomas is one of these, and I'm glad I read this book so I could come to appreciate that about him.

Patrick Peterson says

Justice Thomas reads this book himself. Very sober, deliberate style. It might even be considered a bit boring in the beginning. But gradually it builds into a gripping tale of perseverance and strong, independent characters.

At the end of the 2nd of 9 CDs (12 hours), he is about a 20 or 21 year old junior at Holy Cross College, and he just discovered "Ann Rand." He says he did not accept all the tenets of Rand's philosophy of Objectivism, but it made much sense of the world. It was clear that he got some major benefits from reading her novels *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*, particularly the latter, for the importance and advantages of being an individualist. He read this book at a time when he was just starting to reject the socialist ideas so prevalent on campus and among his few fellow black classmates and protesters. Yes, protesters, he did quite a bit of that and was quite radical.

The portrait of his grandfather and the ideas and habits Thomas learned from this "barely literate man who had only a third grade education," but became a proud, independent businessman, who raised Clarence Thomas and his brother with his loving wife, after Thomas's mother was just not able to do so, is truly inspirational. As the title of the book alludes, this is the main theme of the book.

There are many interesting parts to the book for me, and anyone who wants to know more about this, arguably, most libertarian of all the Supreme Court justices now sitting, or even of the last 50-70 years or so, might enjoy his descriptions of:

1. How the strain of confirmation hearings and scandalous behavior therein drove him toward a much more religious based life.
2. What was his full history with Anita Hill and how her story did not match many, many facts.
3. How affirmative action at Yale haunted him his whole career and his consequent low opinion of Yale Law School and many graduates.

4. Just how poor his birth family was and how he happened to be raised by his grandparents.
5. How conscious he is of (some of) his libertarian beliefs.
6. Major and some more minor incidents and challenges in his life which molded his character and opinions. He experienced some very major struggles: with personal finances, with his racial and personal identity, with alcohol, with his first marriage, with his rage against injustice, with the lessons his grandfather "daddy" tried to teach him.

But what I missed not hearing in the book was:

1. Any discussion of Supreme Court cases since his confirmation,
2. More details on his judicial philosophy or outlines of his theory of justice,
3. What other economists did he read, or pay attention to besides Thomas Sowell and Walter Williams (since economics is my main thing).

I highly recommend the book for younger people especially, who do not know the story of Thomas and those terrible confirmation hearings. But not just for that, rather for the story of a man determined to live a life of meaning and truth, as best he sees it. The struggle of his life is palpable in this book. The strong, positive lessons he learned over half a lifetime from his grandfather, are precious.

P.S. I actually met and interacted with Clarence Thomas on several occasions. The first was when I read a story on him by Juan William in a magazine when he was head of the EEOC in the late 80s. I was so impressed with some facts revealed in the story: that he had a Gallatin "Don't Tread on Me" flag behind his office desk and that one of his favorite books was Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*, and took ideas I cherished very seriously, that I wrote him. He responded very quickly by calling me. I was pretty shocked, but I at least had the presence of mind to ask him if he ever came to town, Chicago, would he like to give a speech? He said sure, he actually had a case that would be bringing him to Chicago in a few months. With further discussions it was agreed that he would talk about Education alternatives, a subject very near and dear to his heart, to an audience invited by The Heartland Institute, where I worked as their Development Director. As I remember, he talked totally from no notes and very much captivated the audience. We had a wonderful little dinner afterwards with a few others, including a local friend of his, Lee Walker, of the New Coalition for Economic and Social Change, who later started working with Heartland.

I am writing this PS on 14 April 2016 partly because I just found out about the upcoming HBO show "Confirmation" which, by the write-up I read at "inverse.com", looks to be a highly biased, and probably quite false, attack on Thomas. I hope my review above inspires at least some to consider the facts of the confirmation hearings and Thomas's life, as presented by Thomas himself.
