

# America's Boy



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著者:Wade Rouse

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From Publishers Weekly

The tacky environs of the Missouri Ozarks in the 1970s set in relief a budding gay sensibility in this funny, affecting, overripe memoir. Wearing his mother's bikini and pearls to a mock beauty pageant at age five, winning office in his high school's Future Homemakers club, feigning romantic interest in a string of female beards, Rouse was hopelessly out of step with the redneck masculinity urged on him by taunting classmates and despairing relatives. Fortunately, he had a charmingly offbeat family, led by two warmhearted grandmothers, who accepted him as he was (without asking too many questions) and left him with a trove of glowing memories. The plight of a queer soul fighting for life in rural America is familiar literary terrain, and Rouse renders it as a duel between flamboyant camp and white-trash kitsch. He amplifies his inner turmoil with a weepy confessional tone, obsessing about his compulsive overeating, body issues, hair issues and gross bathroom issues, and sobbing endlessly over emotional travails. In the end, the narrative lapses into a clichéd coming-out melodrama. But when Rouse looks away from the mirror to the people around him, the book comes alive with tender portraits of kitsch and kin. Photos. (Apr.)

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From Booklist

Growing up in 1970s Granby, Missouri, a tiny Ozarks town where "trailers outnumber homes and teeth," isn't easy when you're a boy like Wade, who dreams of being crowned "Miss Sugar Creek." As a result, his childhood is a search for places and things that make him feel safe: the smell of coffee, his grandparents' lofty feather bed, and--best of all--the family cabin on Sugar Creek, where he can relax and be himself. Rouse's affectionate, episodic evocation of his loving, extended, and slightly eccentric family is engaging but a bit predictable until the unthinkable happens: his older brother is killed in a motorcycle accident, and life for the survivors becomes darker, more dangerous, and--for readers--more interesting as Wade, who has always defined himself by his family, must find himself and come to terms with his homosexuality. "I have outed myself to myself," he writes, and "for once it's not about the past." Michael Cart

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