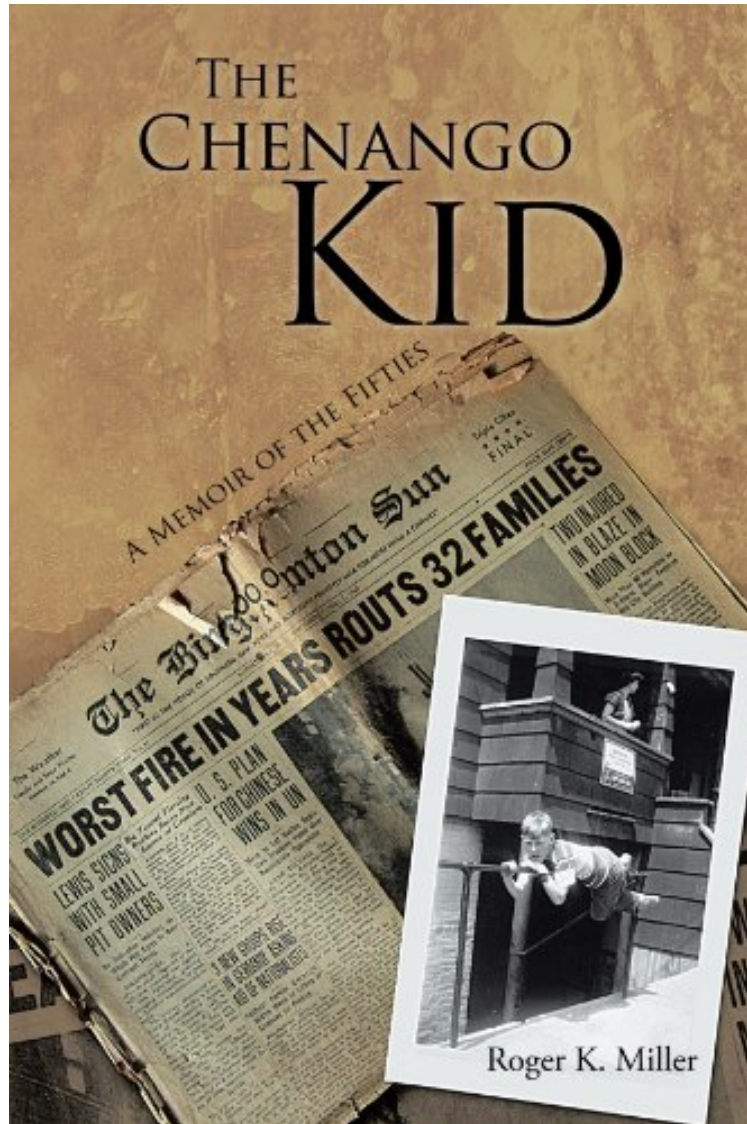


(Mobile book) The Chenango Kid: A Memoir of the Fifties

The Chenango Kid: A Memoir of the Fifties

Roger K. Miller

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Roger K. Miller : The Chenango Kid: A Memoir of the Fifties before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Chenango Kid: A Memoir of the Fifties:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. How Does He Do It? By MaudeA prodigious memory, I guess, and the ability to research, but beyond that, it takes heart to call up all the things Roger Miller mentions in this most memorable autobiography. Actually, I'm not sure which comes first, the heart or the memory, but one thing's sure - both of them together make for an unforgettable record of exactly what it was like in the 50s and 60s - a time that gets far less credit than it deserves for what made, and makes, America great. In fact, all the particulars of Roger Miller's

early life, dates and details duly appended, build up to a hugely entertaining autobiography that I, at least, found hard to put down. Maybe that's because roughly we lived through the same times, but, a dividend beyond that, the personal wry, spry guy that comes through here is someone you want to be friends with. Not just to discuss those days, innocent and not so innocent, that are gone forever, but to share the memories that still remain with us who lived them. Miller's interesting asstringence, fostered by the bittersweet days of youth covered here, is often relieved by his ironic refocusing, but happily he does not adopt the all-seeing omnipotence that some autobiographers enjoy. (For instance, in discussing some of the music of the time, and its "combination of clever inspired writing and excellent musicianship," he muses, "I wonder what I thought of it as a teenager. What did I think I was seeing?") His laser memory alone would make this book, as a reliable record of the world "the way it was" in those days, but the use to which he puts it helps to explain not only the Miller version of life but the national direction of his time, so soon aborted. Still, beyond the details that make this autobiography an unparalleled record of the times, the reader cannot miss the hard-won fight that made the writer what he is, as well. A fight that was well worth the effort, in a time that rewarded such struggle.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Lost in the '50s TonightBy ossieIf you're of a certain age (and even if you're not) "The Chenango Kid" is a treat. Those of us who, like Roger K. Miller, traveled through the '40s and '50s on the way to adulthood will identify on many levels with this bittersweet story of one guy's coming of age. Miller pulls no punches in describing the unvarnished ups and downs of a sometimes difficult childhood and adolescence. But anybody who remembers a world of Lash LaRue, secret decoder rings ordered from the backs of cereal boxes, Duane Eddy, "The Perfect Squelch," "I Was a Communist for the FBI" and countless other icons of the '50s will be right at home here. This is better than watching reruns of "I Love Lucy" or "American Bandstand," or poring over old copies of Life and Look and the Saturday Evening Post, or even going out in your back yard with a Geiger counter and searching for uranium. If you were part of the fifties, you'll know what that means, and Miller's been there. All this and an elegant, fluid narrative besides. I couldn't put it down, but finally had to, only because I had reached the last page...

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Fond MemoriesBy Juliet,BNHS,59Roger's book brought back memories of the "golden age" of growing up in a small town in the 1950s--an age when walking home on Thursday nights from downtown was not only safe, but fun; an age of respect for high school teachers; an age devoid of drugs and school shootings; an age not yet deeply influenced by television violence; an age of innocence and the promise of a financially secure future unscarred by the woes of our parents' experiences with two world wars and the "Great Depression". Truly it was an enjoyable nostalgic journey.

Two narratives intertwine in *The Chenango Kid*. One is the personal story of the author, Roger Miller, who grew up on Chenango Street, a main artery of the medium-sized industrial city of Binghamton, New York, in the 1950s. The second is the larger story of the 1950s. Each narrative enlarges upon the other. Many elements make up the personal: a devastating house fire; a single mother who liked to work and to frequent taverns; a father, mystified by life; less devoted to work than to benignly stalking his son; a half-sister long unknown; a drunken and/or crazy uncle or two; a boyhood paradise in the hills of Pennsylvania; and a passion for reading and art. All in all an unconventionally conventional working-class youth. *The Chenango Kid* also connects Chenango Street to the wider world of the Fifties, a vibrant, explosive decade in art, literature, music, movies, and television--making it *The Decade That Never Ends*. The popular culture of no other ten-year span in the century continues to exert its influence as strongly or to be revived as often as that of the 1950s.

From BlueInk, an independent, objective online journal: "As for Miller's reflections about the literature, music and politics of the 1950s, he delivers understanding beyond the superficial.... all literate women and men who remember that decade will find plenty to roll over in their minds in this wide-ranging and thoughtful memoir." From the Inside Flap Roger Miller, aka *The Chenango Kid*, spent more of his boyhood than he probably should have sitting in the dark watching the Bowery Boys, Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis, outer-space invaders, and, especially, cowboy epics. Almost any Western hero would do, but it was the oaters of Charles Starrett, aka *The Durango Kid*, turned out at the rate of seven or eight a year, that sent him eagerly racing to be first in line at the box office of the Star Theater on Chenango Street in Binghamton, New York, in the late 1940s and early 1950s. So here's lookin' at you, Kid! Not only did you (and your sidekick, Smiley Burnette) give the author pleasure watching your movies, but your nickname gave him a title for a book about watching them--and about all the pleasures, pains, joys, sorrows, triumphs, and failures of growing up in the Decade That Never Ends. From the Back Cover From *The Chenango Kid*: So there we were on that cold gray December afternoon, walking home north on Chenango Street from Christopher Columbus School, me, my sister Louise, and Louise's friend Francine.... I trudged alongside them, puffy in my thick winter coat and with the earflaps on my cap dangling loose around my ears, truculent at being ignored and letting out an occasional "Wee-zee!" for attention. "What?" Louise finally snapped, turning abruptly to face me on the snow-covered sidewalk. "Will you for God's sake stop dinging me?" "Dinging me." She got that from our mother, who was always saying that. "You weren't listening to me. I asked if you'd take me to see Abbott and Costello. The new one with that Frankenstein guy." "No, you little pest," Louise said, walking again. "They're stupid. Besides, you're old enough to go by yourself. Go

with your snot-nosed little friends." It's true. I could have gone by myself. Kids regularly went to "the show," alone or in groups, without adult supervision in those days. "I don't have any money." "So how am I supposed to get you in, for crying out loud? On my looks? Ask Ma for some money. Turn in some milk bottles for the deposits." "I already did. There's none left. I can't find any more." "That's tough titty, then. Maybe Santa will bring you a movie ticket." Despite her sarcasm and belligerence, Louise was protective of me. The year before, in a fury, she broke the nose of an older boy who had pushed me down and rubbed my face in the snow. It cost Ma almost one hundred dollars in medical reimbursement to the boy's angry parents. The parents would have sued for other damages, too, but they knew a bloodless turnip when they saw one.