

Rick Niece

Small towns are used to watching their children spread their wings and leave the nest, but there's also something to be said for coming home.



Fanfare for a Hometown Series - Book 3

Perfect in Memory: A Son's Tribute to His Mother

Perfect in Memory celebrates the life of Dr. Rick Niece's beloved mother, Dortha Jean "Dodie" Niece. Written as a tribute to a remarkable woman, Niece's heartfelt remembrances focus with tender reflection on the richness that makes life so beautiful.

About *Perfect in Memory*

The third book in the award-winning *Fanfare for a Hometown* series, *Perfect in Memory: A Son's Tribute to His Mother*, is a gift Rick D. Niece wishes he had started sooner. Gathering with his family at his mother's bedside, Rick prepares to say goodbye to the woman who shaped his life and will live on through his memories. During the last four days of her life, Rick remembers his mother's legacy with tenderness. Savoring the "little moments" of life, he reflects upon his childhood in DeGraff, Ohio, and shares the carefully pocketed memories readers will wish were their own.

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A Buck a Book!

One dollar for every copy of *Perfect in Memory* sold will go directly to Arkansas Hospice. More information about Arkansas Hospice is available at www.arkansashospice.org.

Reviews

5 Stars!

Perfect in Memory: *A Son's Tribute to His Mother* by Rick D. Niece is the third non-fiction book in a series by this author. This is a touching tribute, written by a son reflecting on the loving memory of his dear mother. The author writes of his memories with love and affection, detailing his family, the small town he lived in, and the relationships that impacted his youth. It was especially touching as I read about his parents, and the love and respect that they shared for one another. The author clearly doted on his mother, and this book gives the reader a perfect insight into that relationship.

Perfect in Memory also takes you as a reader back to a special time that some of us may still remember; the days without social media and technology, and the simplicity of life as a family where dinner times and communication were important to a relationship and sense of family. The author demonstrates a good sense of humor, and brings the reader in emotionally, leaving me with a lump in my throat in many parts of his story. He writes in a way that draws you in effortlessly, and as I put the book down after the final page, I found myself looking up the earlier two stories of this series. I also loved the formatting of this eBook and the chapter starters - it was original and for a reader, a perfect touch to add to the quality of this novel. I commend Rick D. Niece for his transparency and passion in this touching memoir, and I recommend anyone who holds their mother close to their heart to read this story, as it truly reminds you to cherish what you have in life.

— Sarah Rollin, Readers' Favorites

A gifted writer...

Just finished "*Perfect in Memory*." Very emotional right now, as our lives mirrored in many ways. Guess growing up in a small town in our era bolstered by family near and far is similar, be it in Ohio or Arkansas. Words are inadequate to express just how much I enjoyed reading the Fanfare for a Hometown series. You're a gifted writer, both of prose and poetry. Thanks SO much for your labor of love and shared memories. It was my joy to have read them.

— Len B.

Rick D. Niece will have readers laughing and crying as it brings up their own memories.

"*Perfect in Memory*" by Rick D. Niece is a tribute to a mother's love, devotion, and sacrifice. As the author states, all his mother ever wanted was to, "Be a good mother

and make it perfect for my boys.” What mother doesn’t want things to be perfect for their children?

The story itself is written in an unusual way. The author’s intent was to write about childhood memories to share with his mother while she was home bound with pulmonary fibrosis. He never got the chance. One of the things he remembers was that he and she were always remembering events while the children were growing up, and this was the only bond he and his mother shared. He wrote this book with encouragement from his wife, to bring some hope and love to his mother prior to her passing.

As I was reading these memories, it reminded me of times when life was simple, family values meant something, and we often learned to do without. It will remind readers how we are so caught up in technology today that we have forgotten how to have a real conversation, visit people in person and even say “I love you” face to face, as we now do these things through texts or on social media. Niece does an excellent job of turning back time and helping readers remember the way things used to be, and that regardless of strife in families, one can always remember good times.

At the beginning of the book, the term automythographies is discussed. I had never heard this term. The definition is basically, “Memories are based on an author’s life in no particular order and are based on what he/she thinks they remember and how he/she thinks they remember it.” Each family member might remember things or events in a different way, but it is the author’s thoughts first and foremost.

“Perfect in Memory” by Rick D. Niece will have readers laughing and crying as it brings up their own memories. For this reviewer, it meant don’t wait until tomorrow to tell significant others how you feel.

— Carol Hoyer for Reader Views

Author Rick Niece capitalizes on his Ohio childhood stories in the third and final book in the nostalgic Fanfare for a Hometown Series.

Perfect in Memory: A Son's Tribute to His Mother (Fanfare for a Hometown)

“The plan was to read them [the stories] to Mom as she rested in Queen Anne's comfort [her special chair] while receiving supplemental oxygen through a cannula in her nose. Through my stories, I secretly hoped she might breathe in streams of rejuvenating oxygen from the lungs of life's good memories relived.” Yet Rick Niece's stated idea never unfolds quite as he hopes. The unexpected happens when he gets word that his mother (who has an incurable lung disease called idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis) is in the hospital and that her condition is worsening. The reality is that Mom is dying and the chance of her being his fact checker providing accuracy to the retelling of past stories is

very slim.

Flying to Arizona from Arkansas has its hiccups. With delays in Chicago, Rick and his wife Sherée arrive in Tucson, getting to his mom's 4th floor hospital room moments before visiting hours are over. Relieving his dad and brother Kurt, Rick decides to keep watch over mom by spending the night in the waiting room. The following morning, Rick is surprised to see his dad at Mom's bedside. While stories over the course of three days pore out from his parents including how they met and their intense love for one another, they also send up red flags of his father's denial and his mother's fear of death.

Niece, a retired university president turned author, identifies his three-book memoir series as automythography. Defined as "a work of nonfiction that looks reflectively at what we think we remember, and how we think we remember it," the term not only describes how Niece recalls his familial memories, but also offers a realistic picture of how most people recall stories from their past. Niece divides his narrative into five sections, constantly alternating between the present and the past. While capturing his mother's dying moments, Niece seamlessly weaves in memories from his childhood hometown of DeGraff, Ohio.

A mixture of comedy and poignancy, Niece covers a multitude of interesting themes in his tribute to his mother—from Avon soap pistols, the Easter Bunny, and Jesus bookmarks to cement mixers, converted clubhouses, an unlikely Arthur Murray dance partner, African violets, and gin, just to name a few. In addition to his engaging storytelling, Niece aptly sprinkles in a variety of poetry that includes free form, metrical verse, acrostic, haiku, and shaped formats.

Quill says: A wistful yet uplifting read, *Perfect in Memory* will seriously get you crying and laughing simultaneously.

— Anita Lock, Feathered Quill Book Reviews

Praise for *Perfect in Memory*, Book 3 in the award-winning *Fanfare for a Hometown* series!

Rick Niece has done it again.

Niece, the former president of the University of the Ozarks in Arkansas, made his Ohio hometown come alive for us in his first two books, "*Side-Yard Superhero*" and "*The Band Plays On*."

Now, he has completed the third book in his Fanfare for a Hometown series, "*Perfect in Memory: A Son's Tribute to His Mother*."

If we were as lucky as Rick Niece, Dortha Jean "Dodie" Niece will remind us of our own

mothers. You'll find yourself smiling one moment and with tears in your eyes the next as you read.

Niece began writing the series at the urging of his wife, Sheree, so he could read stories to his mother during her final months of life. She had moved into a guesthouse on the Ozarks campus adjacent to the president's home.

Niece says: "I wrote whenever I could find the time. And when I did, the writing was intense, occurring early in the morning, late at night, in airports, during flights and on frequent road trips to visit university donors, alumni and friends. Days and nights were filled with hours of writing and revising, revising and writing. I wanted my stories to be as perfect as possible before I read them to her."

Niece's mother came from strong German ancestry. Her own mother had died from leukemia at age 37, and her father disappeared soon after the funeral. Dodie Niece was just 16 at the time and suddenly had to care for two brothers, ages 13 and 3. Rick Niece lovingly tells how she handled that task and then went on to raise a son who would become a talented educator and writer.

Once you start reading, you'll find it hard to put "*Perfect in Memory*" down.

— **Rex Nelson, columnist, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette**

Praise for *Perfect in Memory*, Book 3 in the award-winning *Fanfare for a Hometown* series!

"*Perfect in Memory*, accented with complementing poetry, exemplifies unconditional love via family, friends, and emotions. I treasured each chapter and wish the "award-winning" *Fanfare for a Hometown* series would continue."

— **Ginny Hittepole Myers, Retired Educator**

Praise for *Perfect in Memory*, Book 3 in the award-winning *Fanfare for a Hometown* series!

"What a lovely and inspiring story. When I started reading it I had to stop and text my own sweet mom, who, yes, at 72, texts often."

— **Kim Keelor-Parker, Communications Specialist**

I loved the book!

The book is Rick Niece's memoir about growing up in DeGraff, Ohio, and particularly about his friend Bernie who had severe cerebral palsy, and the special bond they shared. After having left town for many years and losing track of Bernie, Rick tries to find him again.

I loved the book! The way Rick describes the town and stories about his childhood, it really makes you wish you lived in a place like DeGraff and had friends like Rick and Bernie.

— **Michael D., Scholastic Grade 12 Reviews**

If you buy books to give as gifts, I recommend giving this book a try!

Since my family did not immigrate to the US until the late 80's, I actually don't know much about 50's and 60's America except for what I have seen on TV. Reading *The Band Plays On* has been wonderful because it gave me a real sense of what it was like growing up during that era in a small town. The story is told through Dr. Niece's memory of a small town and how it impacted him. It is a story about family values and education. As I was reading through the book, I found myself really enjoying the details he was able to provide about the daily lives of a small-town population. I could not help but noticing how different things are today. His story is inspirational and heartwarming.

If you buy books to give away as Christmas gifts like we do, I recommend giving this book a try!

— **Jennifer, Sugar Pop Ribbons Reviews**

This is a touching story of a Son's love and admiration to his father.

What a great story of a childhood memories, growing up as the band director's son, living in a small town in DeGraff Ohio where everyone knew everyone.

Being the band director's son as a child seems to be a lot of fun, responsibility, and also a great honor. However, putting together an Alumni Band as an adult, with all the members from your childhood who had your dad as their director, seems to be a challenging but fulfilling task.

It is a wonderful walk down memory lane, in a wonderfully caring town who took care of each other and always supported life's path of one another, as children and as adults. To honor a great man Lewis Niece, by creating an Alumni Band, and playing right

alongside the high school band in a performance to remember, is something that is touching to the core and says something about what a wonderful man, and inspirational relationship a father and son have together.

This was to me a great story, as my son is in the high school's marching band! He plays trombone and has for the last 3 years. He has had 3 band directors in that time, and I give thanks to the first one, who handed him the instrument and said, "YOU CAN DO THIS!" His second band director, a wonderful man, who not only guided his musical talent, but encouraged him to keep with one instrument because he knew he had something in him that would take him far. This teacher was and still is there for my son as he has moved on to high school now but will still come to my son's performances and cheer him on, he gives him wonderful advice, not just about music, but in life experiences as well! His 3rd band director, whom is his teacher now, is a great man, who keeps it fun and keeps the sometimes-tiring rehearsals and practices upbeat and worthwhile. I am a proud band mama and do still yell and whisper loudly and proudly while my son plays, just like Ricks mom did when it was his time to play!

— **Amanda MH, Pretty Pink Momma**