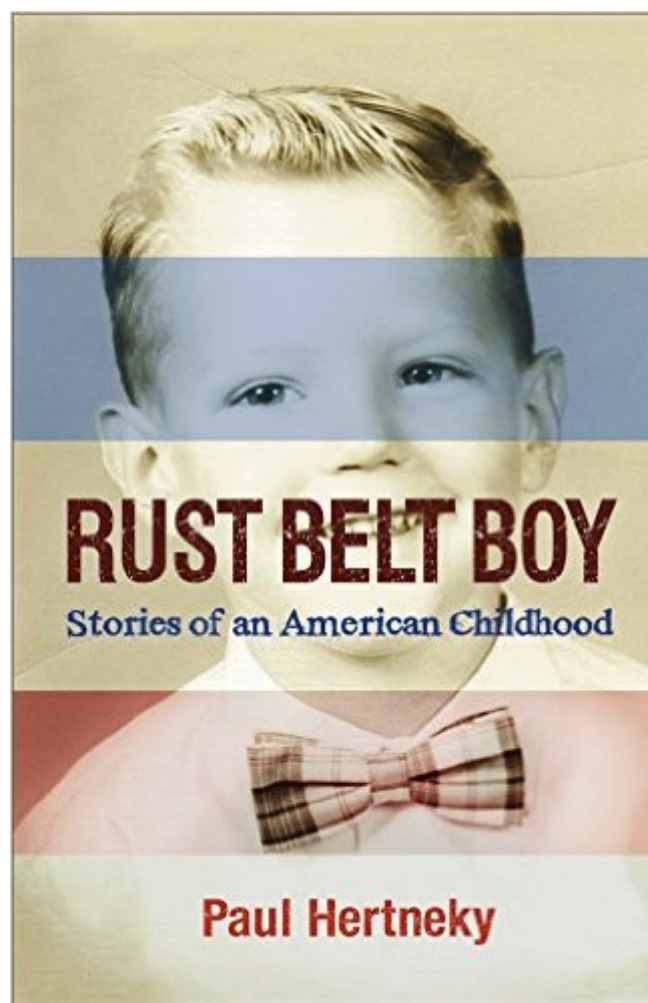


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# Rust Belt Boy: Stories Of An American Childhood



## Synopsis

Tales of a largely unknown and recurrent Promised Land, revealing the soul of industrial life, and a yearning for broader horizons

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I'm not from this part of the world and not particularly connected to the Rust Belt but the writing here takes me to places and connects me with people and emotions like few writers have the ability to do. Paul Hertneky makes me care and brings me to a world where I learn and feel the complexities of place. These are truly human stories with universal appeal. Read this book.

Rust Belt Boy is smart and charming...something we would expect from a memoir that includes local history as well as great stories about growing up and out of the "rust belt". Paul Hertneky has done a superb job of capturing the angst of the end of the steel mill era, one which led to disappointment and much soul searching for a large region stretching from Buffalo to Pittsburgh to Duluth. The second and third generations whose families came from places such as Germany, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, and many more, had to leave the region to find work or get a college education, or sometimes both. The mouth-watering surprise in this book, however, is the devotion and description of homemade perogies or pirohi, a stuffed dumpling that both children and adults would daydream about until they had their fill.

Hertneky does an outstanding job chronicling the history of the immigrant people who helped build

America with their â œsteelyâ • fortitude, while at the same time, retracing his footsteps from boyhood to manhood with eyes wide open, mind alert, body lusting, and heart engaged. We travel with him as he brings the Rust Belt back to life despite its past decay, helping us see whatâ™s been hidden from view; helping us remember what we never should forget. Itâ™s an important story that needed to be told, and Hertneky tells it well, writing with depth and integrity. But itâ™s also a fun read and extremely personable. I felt like I was sitting at his momâ™s kitchen table eating a hearty Slavic dish as he spun tales that kept me wanting for more. The book is a must read for anyone who grew up in the Rust Belt, or for those who wants to deepen their understanding of how family, culture, and community shape us into the people we become.

I, too, am a baby boomer who left Pittsburgh as a young adult looking for other places, yet without ever turning my back on Pittsburgh. There's something about that city. And there's something about Paul Hertneky's writing. Evocative and lyrical, every sentence is to be savored. And the story as a whole is a beautiful depiction of growing up in a certain place and time. Baby boomers who didn't grow up near Pittsburgh will nonetheless recognize the world of their childhood. And for those of us who grew up in Western Pennsylvania around that time, well, it will make us all a little verklempt.

Paul Hertneky beautifully weaves history, imagery, and memoir in *Rust Belt Boy*. As a near-contemporary growing up not far from Hertneky's Ambridge, Pennsylvania, I read a story familiar enough to be my own. He captures the era, the aspirations and disappointments in beautiful language that is honest without tipping to sentimental. This book will speak to anyone who came of age in the waning industrial regions of the United States, and for anyone who wants to understand those who did. More importantly, perhaps, as our economy cycles through these periods of rise and decay, *Rust Belt Boy* is a story as real today as it was 40 years ago.

Growing up in the area gave me a wonderful insight into this book. I gave a copy as a gift to a friend in Bethlehem PA which followed the same fate as Ambridge. Once I started reading it I couldn't put it down. I think this will be high on my list as Christmas gifts this year.

Poignant, thoughtful and thought-provoking memoir of life in the gritty, hardscrabble Pittsburgh of the sixties and seventies. Penned by a writer who clearly loves and recognizes the power of words and a well-turned phrase. I would recommend it to anyone.

What a wonderful read! Paul has certainly captured the essence of living in an area that started rustic but kept the traditions that even a non @yinzer" would appreciate. I laughed, I cried and remembered. I left for 20 years and have since returned. I am looking forward to reading more from Paul.

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