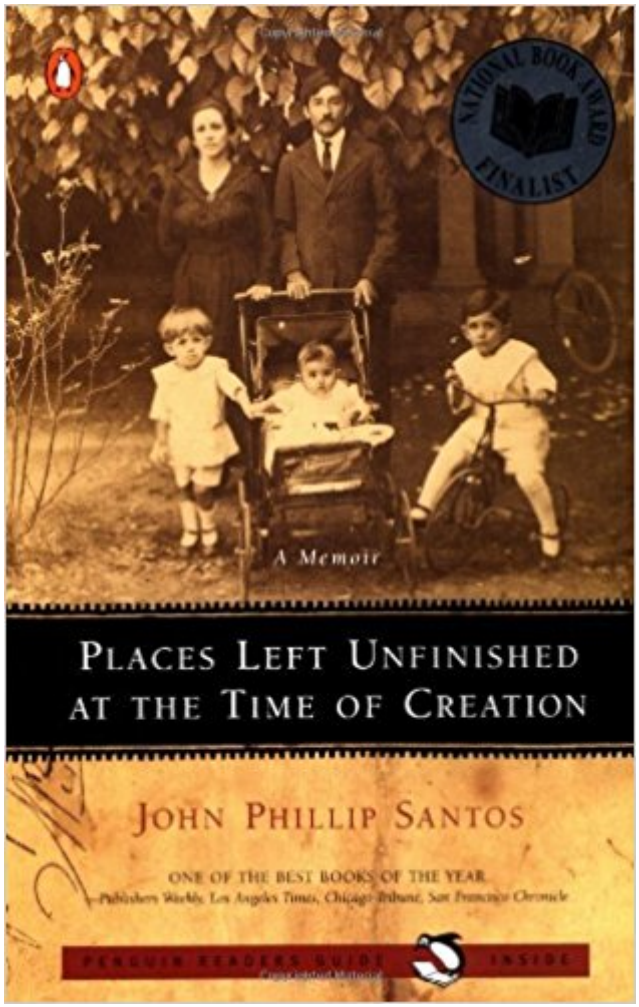
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Places Left Unfinished At The Time Of Creation



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Synopsis

Finalist for the National Book Award!In this beautifully wrought memoir, award-winning writer John Philip Santos weaves together dream fragments, family remembrances, and Chicano mythology, reaching back into time and place to blend the story of one Mexican family with the soul of an entire people. The story unfolds through a pageant of unforgettable family figures: from Madrina--touched with epilepsy and prophecy ever since, as a girl, she saw a dying soul leave its body--to Teofilo, who was kidnapped as an infant and raised by the Kikapu Indians of Northern Mexico. At the heart of the book is Santos' search for the meaning of his grandfather's suicide in San Antonio, Texas, in 1939. Part treasury of the elders, part elegy, part personal odyssey, this is an immigration tale and a haunting family story that offers a rich, magical view of Mexican-American culture.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Mexican American journalist John Phillip Santos's lyrical and loving memoir explores his family's history in magnificent prose touched with the singing cadences of his Spanish-language heritage yet vibrant with the energy of American English. It's a combination utterly suited to his native San Antonio, where las viejitas--the little old ladies of the Garcia and Santos families--ruled over their children and grandchildren with the toughness and grandeur of the Mexico they left during the revolution of 1914. "Poised between those ancient Indio origins from the south ... and our Mestizo future in the north," these new Texans made Mexico live for their descendants in the magical stories and folkloric practices of an older culture. Yet there was also a sense of secrets kept and cherished

possessions left behind, of people who had traveled far and traveled light. The "wind of story" was also "a wind of forgetting," and as Santos probes his heritage, he comes to understand that "it is okay to move on and forget." Nonetheless, this is a book that restores to memory the drama not just of a single family but of an entire people whose past is more closely entwined with that of the United States than some Americans care to remember. Santos depicts them with care and dignity. --Wendy Smith --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Mexico was always an empire of forgetting," writes Santos in his elegantly crafted chronicle of one of the thousands of Mexican families who fled to El Norte during the Mexican Revolution. An award-winning documentary television producer for CBS and the first Mexican-American Rhodes Scholar (1979), Santos struggles with the destiny of "every Mexican" to either embrace or lose entirely the "hidden light left behind in the past with los Abuelos" (one’s grandparents). In a story told in part by ghosts, Santos takes the reader through the Inframundo, the timeless underworld of the ancient peoples of Mexico, to find out how he came to be the scion of a now-childless family. His tale is inhabited by eclectic charactersAa clairvoyant albino aunt; a great-grandfather stolen by the Kickapu Indians; an aunt who learned English from the young Lyndon Baines Johnson in exchange for cabbages and potatoes. Then there was Santos’s grandfather, Juan Jos?, whose unresolved death by drowning in 1939 haunts the book. Combining traditional memoir, ancient Mexican history and beliefs, personal sacramental journeys and ghostly interviews, Santos gallops across the desert mountains of Coahuila through a flood of migrating Monarch butterflies, recalls long-ago predawn breakfast rituals in a Mexican village and flies with the Aztec "guardians of time"Athe Volador dancers at the 1968 HemisFair in San Antonio. His book is one of the most insightful investigations into Mexican-American border culture available. Agent, Janis Valelly, Flaming Star Literary Enterprises; 10-city author tour. (Sept.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Santos eloquently and humbly unfolds his story, his family’s story, our story. Like the millions of Mexican-American families who repeatedly cross the border in order to sustain their lives and history, Santos crosses back and forth with tender testimonials, giving life to the varied and vigorous communities on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. It is a splendid memoir filled with universal themes of strong family bonds and appreciation for remembering the past. The author is subtle but powerful in his writing.

Excellent contribution to the canon of Hispanic literature. What's hard to believe is that there is no comprehensive literary anthology of San Antonio anywhere, or at least none that I can find. You've got literary Houston, literary El Paso, literary Austin, and literary Ft. Worth -- single volumes of collected works -- but no literary San Antonio, which, unfortunately, just goes right to the heart of Santos' story: the pity of forgetting and of being forgotten.

Great book, it really touches home. I live in San Antonio & know these places very well. I've seen the Voladores when I was a child at Hemisfair in '68 & was also mesmerized by the dance & culture. I myself wonder about my family's history & reminded how each & every one of us has a story to tell, some of which go untold when we die.

A fascinating book. My wife is a native of the Beacon Hill neighborhood where the author's family lived, so we were very pleased to read all the historical references about San Antonio. A great book.

Santos does a masterful job of portraying a Mexican/American family in San Antonio, South Texas, and Northern Mexico. The reader becomes familia with him and his wonderful family. Without bitterness he peels off the cover of racism and discrimination that so many have suffered from. Un buen libro. Father of David Santos,,,

An engrossing exploration of the melancholia that haunts many American mejicanos interwoven into a personal experience of loss...just now the metaphor of losing one's roots has become quite obvious. Lovely and powerful.

The reason why I have to say "good enough" is because I bought this product "NEW" and what came to me was a book with a really bent up corner, and some writing on the side with sharpie. New!!!?? I think not!!!! But since I have to use this book for a summer assignment and summer is almost over I have to stick with this book to the end. Luckily, there is no writing inside the book,

I love this book for many reasons.....including that many of the places he talks about are part of my heritage and life experience.

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