I tell of a time, a place, and a way of life long gone. For many years I have
had the urge to describe that treasure trove, lest it vanish forever. So,
partly in response to the basic human instinct to share feelings and
experiences, and partly for the sheer joy and excitement of it all, I report on
my early life. It was quite a romp.

So begins Mildred Kalish’s story of growing up on her grandparents’ Iowa
farm during the depths of the Great Depression. With her father banished
from the household for mysterious transgressions, five-year-old Mildred
and her family could easily have been overwhelmed by the challenge of
simply trying to survive. This, however, is not a tale of suffering.

Kalish counts herself among the lucky of that era. She had caring
grandparents who possessed—and valiantly tried to impose—all the
pioneer virtues of their forebears, teachers who inspired and befriended
her, and a barnyard full of animals ready to be tamed and loved. She and
her siblings and their cousins from the farm across the way played as hard
as they worked, running barefoot through the fields, as free and wild as
they dared.

Filled with recipes and how-tos for everything from catching and skinning a
rabbit to preparing homemade skin and hair beautifiers, apple cream pie,
and the world’s best head cheese (start by scrubbing the head of the pig
until it is pink and clean), Little Heathens portrays a world of hardship and
hard work tempered by simple rewards. There was the unsurpassed flavor of tender new dandelion greens harvested as soon as the snow melted; the taste of crystal clear marble-sized balls of honey robbed from a bumblebee nest; the sweet smell from the body of a lamb sleeping on sun-warmed grass; and the magical quality of oat shocking under the light of a full harvest moon.

Little Heathens offers a loving but realistic portrait of a “hearty-handshake Methodist” family that gave its members a remarkable legacy of kinship, kindness, and remembered pleasures. Recounted in a luminous narrative filled with tenderness and humor, Kalish’s memoir of her childhood shows how the right stuff can make even the bleakest of times seem like “quite a romp.”

My Personal Review:
While reading this delightful book, I wondered if the writer and I shared the same grandparents! Although I was a city girl I spent summers on my grandparents’ farm in Mills County Iowa during those depression years. So many things resonated clearly with me, and many other stories she told caused other wonderful memories to resurface. When my much younger sister was born, my grandparents had moved to town - where my grandma could never figure out how to work the gas stove! She could whip up the most marvelous meals and cakes just by adjusting the number of corncobs she added to the fire! I’m sorry my sister doesn’t have these memories of life on the farm…..feeding the pigs, milking the cows (and how my grandpa could aim the milk right into the waiting cats mouths), gathering eggs (Oh, how I hated to reach under a sitting hen for an egg) and playing in the barn…..and oh so many other wonderful things to do on a farm without electricity or running water! And yes, the room I slept in had a wonderful rug made from a horses hide…I thought that was special! Yes, grandma was stern and proper, but also loving and warm. Thanks for this wonderful book.

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:
Little Heathens: Hard Times and High Spirits on an Iowa Farm During the Great Depression - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!