

# Writer: 'I was a teenage hobo'

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Erin Breen

Everett Gracey had a miserable childhood. He came from a poor family, he was mistreated by his own mother and he was misunderstood at school. Color blindness made him the butt of jokes and the focus of schoolyard pranks and he says he spent a lot more time than most wearing a dunce cap. At the age of 13, he'd had enough of his life in Oregon and he left -- he hopped his first rail and headed anywhere to escape his life to that point. Everett Gracey was a teenage hobo.

"It was a life many people lived during the Great Depression," he tells me as we chat at Walden's coffee shop. "Those were desperate times and you did what you had to do to survive. "

Every day was a challenge. Some days were spent fighting off other hobos or the police; some were spent just looking for enough work to get by, or enough food to live on. But he met those challenges as they came, one day at a time. And, in the spirit of Horatio Alger, it paid off for him.

"I joined the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1939. I was 17," he tells me, "and that was the best thing I ever did for myself. It taught me skills and that hard work pays off."

In the years that followed, he joined the infantry, traveled the world, raised a family and learned something from every situation. He took pride in finding business opportunities and, with only a seventh-grade education, knew enough to learn all

he could from others. Everett sold cars, insurance and real estate over the years. And he started his own businesses along the way, ending up in Reno.

At the age of 85, he consults for electronics companies and still takes pride in everything he does. And if there is ever a lull in the action, he fills it with another project.

"It keeps my mind sharp," he says with a smile.

His latest project has been to write down all he could about the fortitude and determination that took him on his original journey away from a broken life to the successes he's seen over the years. Not only did he write it, he published it himself. It's called "From Freight Trains to Airplanes," and he proudly shares it with the hope that young adults will get something out of all he's been through.

"I just think kids these days should believe in themselves and hard work and understand that they can go a very long way if they just apply themselves."

"After all," he says with that infectious smile, "I was a teenage hobo "» and look where the journey has taken me".

Everett Gracey's books are available at [www.EverettGracey.com](http://www.EverettGracey.com)

And if you happen to run in to him at Walden's, you just might hear his story in person.

Erin Breen is a Reno freelance writer and anchor of KTVN's Channel 2 News This Morning.

*Erin Breen is a Reno freelance writer and mother of three. Write her at the Reno Gazette-Journal, PO Box 22000, Reno, Nev. 89520 or e-mail [erinmeehanbreen@sbcglobal.net](mailto:erinmeehanbreen@sbcglobal.net).*