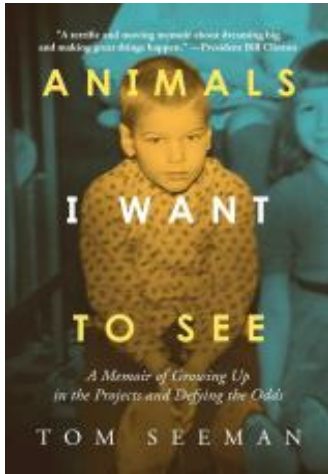


# Animals I Want to See: A Memoir of Growing Up in the Projects and Defying the Odds

by Tom Seeman



## About the Book

A lyrical coming-of-age story set in the projects of Toledo, Ohio, **ANIMALS I WANT TO SEE** explores themes of identity, ambition, religion and friendship --- often across racial and social lines --- as it spotlights a family of 14 and tracks a boy's journey from a child janitor with big dreams to a teenage petty criminal to a student at Yale and Harvard.

*A terrific and moving memoir about dreaming big and making great things happen.?*

*? President Bill Clinton*

*?Tom Seeman has penned an extraordinarily engaging book about his struggles as a youngster, the many folks who ?packed his parachute,? his spiritual journey culminating in finding deep meaning, and the joy he feels in helping others. Read it and be inspired.?*

*? Deepak Chopra*

On Bronson Street, in the projects of Toledo, Ohio, in a crowded house occupied by a family of 14, Tom Seeman starts a very important list. Just as the trash-strewn field in his backyard is home to a treasure trove of wild animals, Tom's list, *?Animals I Want To See One Day,?* is home to dreams of adventure in places far away from the downtrodden neighborhood where he lives. But for all its hardship and crime, Bronson Street is also something of a mythical street, populated by unforgettable people who share food, protect each other, and give surprising gifts of beauty and merriment, proving that the bonds of community and friendship (often across racial and social lines) can bridge any divide and transcend what many of us are taught to believe about each other.

A luminous coming-of-age memoir that shimmers with countless marvels, **ANIMALS I WANT TO SEE** tracks Tom Seeman's journey from a child janitor with big ambitions to a teenage petty criminal to a student at Yale and Harvard.

At once a meditation on finding wonder in unlikely places, an ode to a heroic mother who makes the seemingly impossible possible, and an exploration of what it means to create our own identities, this is a heartwarming, thought-provoking, ultimately uplifting book for all readers.

## Discussion Guide

1. Though *ANIMALS I WANT TO SEE* tells the story of a hardscrabble childhood, it simultaneously tells the story of a happy childhood. What moments do you find most haunting and most inspiring?
2. Discuss Tom's childhood goal of seeing animals from all over the world. What role does his list of animals play, and how does it contribute to his success?
3. The Seeman children think they're moving to "paradise" at the beginning of the book. How do they adapt to reality, and what does it say about their ability to both dream and survive?
4. What do you think of Tom's mother's role in keeping her family together and thriving through incredible hardship? Though she isn't emotionally effusive, in what ways does her love for her children shine? What do you think about the extent of her sacrifice?
5. Tom asks himself if he has "inadvertently cast his father as a two-dimensional, two-bit player on the stage of my memory." How does his father affect him in both positive and negative ways?
6. What role does community play in Tom's childhood --- for example, his friends and neighbors in the housing projects (such as Mr. Noble), the Catholic Church and his teachers? What about his uncles and grandmother?
7. Tom has several significant friendships over the course of the book. Which do you think are most meaningful, and why? How do his choices shift over time?
8. Literature and libraries are important to Tom growing up. Which books or libraries had the most profound impact on you as a young person?
9. After reading *THE LITTLE PRINCE*, Tom vows never to lose his sense of wonder as he gets older. What role does wonder play in *ANIMALS I WANT TO SEE*? What role does it play in your life?
10. From an early age, Tom focuses on shaping himself and his future. Do you think this is mostly innate or that he develops the ability through his experiences?
11. As a boy, Tom clearly enjoys hard work and is unusually thorough in performing his manual jobs. He simultaneously lives a life of the mind. How does the combination of these things contribute to his eventual success?
12. Later in the book, Tom decides to do an act of kindness for someone every day, even if it's something small. What are your thoughts on this practice?

## Author Bio

Tom Seeman is a businessperson who has owned and led several businesses. He grew up in a family of fourteen on welfare and food stamps in the projects of Toledo, Ohio. He earned his B.A. in Economics from Yale, where he rowed on the crew team and graduated *summa cum laude* and Phi Beta Kappa, before going on to earn his J.D. at Harvard.

Tom currently serves on the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Boston and on the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. He funded a scholarship that actively seeks disadvantaged students to attend St. Francis de Sales High School in Toledo --- the school that generously gave him a scholarship and that he credits for helping him fulfill his dream of attending a top college. He has worked across the globe, has lived in five countries and has traveled to over 100.

He lives in Massachusetts with his wife, four children, three dogs and a cat.

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