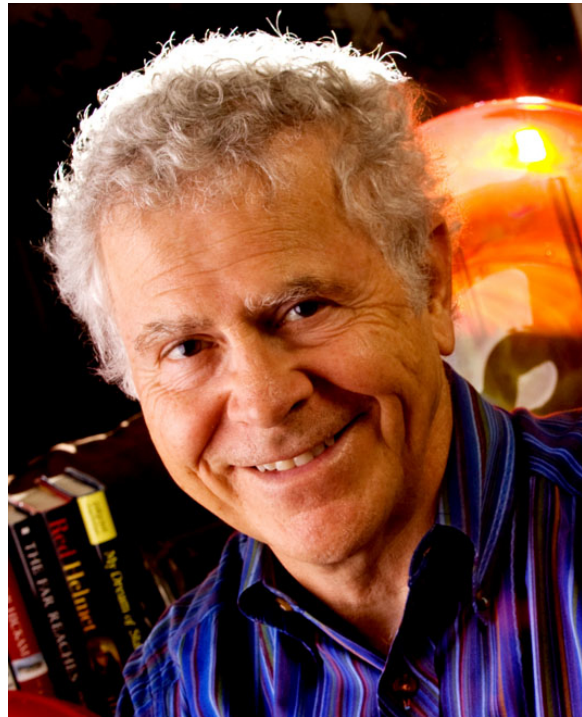


**Meet the Author –
Homer H. Hickam, Jr.**



Homer H. Hickam, Jr. was born on February 19, 1943, the second son of Homer and Elsie Hickam, and was raised in Coalwood, West Virginia. He graduated from Big Creek High School in 1960 and from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute (Virginia Tech) in 1964 with a degree in Industrial Engineering. A U.S. Army veteran, Hickam served as a First Lieutenant in the Fourth Infantry Division in Vietnam in 1967-1968, where he won the Army Commendation and Bronze Star medals. He served six years on active duty, leaving the service with the rank of Captain.

Hickam has been a writer since 1969 after his return from Vietnam. At first, he mostly wrote about his scuba diving adventures for a variety of different magazines. Then, after diving on many of the wrecks involved, he branched off into writing about the battle against the U-boats along the American east coast during World War II. This resulted in his first book, *Torpedo Junction* (1989), a military history bestseller published in 1989 by the Naval Institute Press.

In 1998, Delacorte Press published Hickam's second book, *Rocket Boys: A Memoir*, the story of his life in the little town of Coalwood, West Virginia. It became an instant classic. *Rocket Boys* has since been translated into eight languages and released as an abridged audio book and electronic book. It was selected by the New York Times as one of its "Great Books of 1998" and was an alternate "Book-of-the-Month" selection for both the Literary Guild and Doubleday book clubs. *Rocket Boys* was also nominated by the National Book Critics Circle as Best Biography of 1998.

In February 1999, Universal Studios released its critically acclaimed film *October Sky*, based on *Rocket Boys* (The title *October Sky* is an anagram of *Rocket Boys*). A mass-

market paperback of *Rocket Boys*, re-titled *October Sky*, reached the New York Times # 1 position on their best-seller list. (In 2013, Hickam wrote *From Rocket Boys to October Sky* about the making of the movie from his bestseller.)

The Coalwood Way (2000), a memoir of Homer's hometown, was an alternate "Book-of-the-Month" selection for Doubleday book club. His third Coalwood memoir, published in October 2001, was *Sky of Stone*. It's presently under development as a television movie. His final book about Coalwood was published in 2002, a self help/inspirational tome titled *We Are Not Afraid: Strength and Courage from the Town That Inspired the #1 Bestseller and Award-Winning Movie October Sky*.

Hickam's first fiction novel was *Back to the Moon* (1999) He is also the author of a popular series of novels that feature Josh Thurlow, a Coast Guard officer during World War II. The series began with *The Keeper's Son* (2003), then continued with *The Ambassador's Son* (2005) and *The Far Reaches* (2007).

While working on his writing career, Hickam was employed as an engineer for the U.S. Army Missile Command from 1971 to 1981 and assigned to Huntsville, Alabama, and Germany. He began employment with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration at Marshall Space Flight Center in 1981 as an aerospace engineer. During his NASA career, Hickam worked in spacecraft design and crew training. His specialties at NASA included training astronauts on science payloads, and extravehicular activities (EVA). He also trained astronaut crews for many Spacelab and Space Shuttle missions, including the Hubble Space Telescope deployment mission, the first two Hubble repair missions, Spacelab-J (the first Japanese astronauts), and the Solar Max repair mission. Prior to his retirement in 1998, Hickam was the Payload Training Manager for the International Space Station Program.

In 1984, Hickam was presented with Alabama's Distinguished Service Award for heroism shown during a rescue effort of the crew and passengers of a sunken paddleboat in the Tennessee River. Because of this award, Hickam was honored in 1996 by the United States Olympic Committee to carry the Olympic Torch through Huntsville, Alabama, on its way to Atlanta.

In 1999, the governor of the state of West Virginia issued a proclamation in honor of Hickam for his support of his home state and his distinguished career as both an engineer and author and declared an annual "*Rocket Boys Day*."

Hickam still loves to SCUBA dive and he jogs nearly every day. A new avocation is amateur paleontology. He is married to Linda Terry Hickam, an artist and his first editor and assistant. They love their cats and share their time between homes in Alabama and the Virgin Islands.



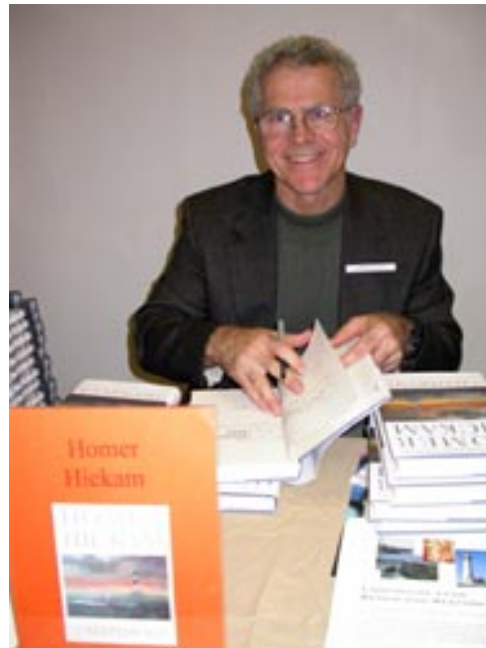
Homer Hickam (Senior), and Homer just before shipping out for Vietnam, 1967



Homer and fellow seniors of Company A, Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets, 1964. Homer is top right with George Fox to his immediate left causing trouble



Homer at work in the Marshall Space Flight Center's Neutral Buoyancy Simulator in 1992.



Homer signing The Keeper's Son, 2003