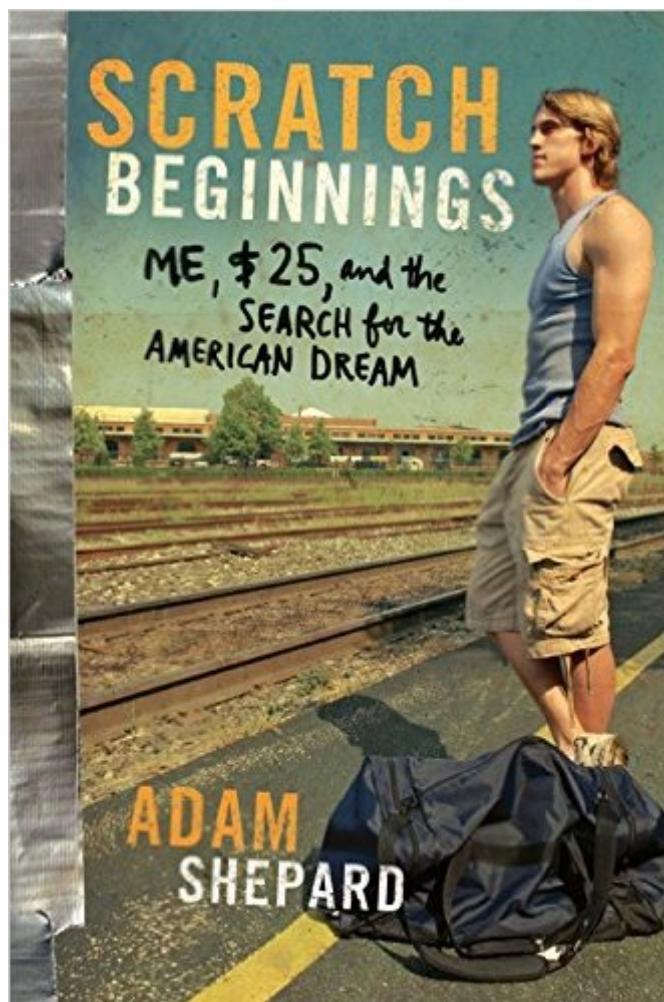


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# Scratch Beginnings: Me, \$25, And The Search For The American Dream



## Synopsis

â œDONâ™T believe the naysayers. The American Dreamâ "the fable that says if you work hard and follow the rules, youâ™ll make itâ "is alive and well.â •â "New York Postâ Adam W. Shepardâ™s *Scratch Beginnings* is the fascinating and eye-opening account of the grand social experiment the author undertook in response to Barbara Ehrenreichâ™s *Nickel and Dimed*. Subtitled âœMe, \$25, and the Search for the American Dream,â • *Scratch Beginnings* chronicles Shepardâ™s successful efforts to raise himself up from self-imposed rock bottom in one yearâ™s timeâ "a personal odyssey that is sure to inspire anyone who reads about it, instilling new faith in the solid principles on which our democracy was built.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have three children ages 12, 17 and 20. I received this book for Christmas and am fascinated by it and will get copies for my children as well as for some of their friends. A person can choose to be nickle and dimed, or can choose to create a plan and stick to it. *Scratch Beginnings* is not the Idiot's Guide for Getting out of Homelessness, but it is proof that anybody with determination can do it. Our church is in downtown Charlotte, NC and we do a lot of work with the homeless. During the winter, we host Room at the Inn twice weekly to handle the overflow from the Men's Shelter. I have spent several nights at church with the homeless group and have always been amazed the majority of the them have full time jobs. They just can't accumulate the nut to get the apartment deposit, utility hookups, etc. The others seem to fall into the groups described at the Charleston shelter: the addicted and the crazies. There are no easy answers when it comes to homelessness. I have seen

some great success stories and some horrible failures including a dead man on a doorstep. I want my children to read your book for two reasons: 1) to know that they have no excuses for not making it in this life as they have had every advantage and a safety net the size of the oceans, and 2) they need to understand the roots of homelessness and what it takes to rise above it. The closest thing I have read to this book is "Finding Fish," which is more a story of redemption and the importance of family. I help teach the AP econ class at a local high school and am going to talk to the teachers about getting the book added to the curriculum. Many of these kids have no clue when it comes to budgeting, goal setting and delayed gratification. Scratch Beginnings is an important lesson.

I liked the premise of this book: Adam Shepard, a recent college graduate, who comes from a background of some privilege, decides to take only a sleeping bag and \$25, chooses a city at random in the southeast of the United States, and sets off on a quest: he wants to see if it is possible to start with next to nothing and within a year achieve the goal of owning a working automobile, a furnished apartment, and at least \$2500 in savings. Some of his initial assumptions troubled me. He said the motivation of his social experiment was his rejection of Barbara Ehrenreich's arguments in "Nickel and Dimed" and "Bait and Switch," which he unfairly reduced and summarized as "working stiffs are doomed to live in the same disgraceful conditions forever," because "hard work and discipline" are "futile pursuits." Ehrenreich was critiquing the disadvantages the working poor and the middle class must suffer under crony corporate capitalism in the Bush years; to be fair to her, she had high admiration and regard for those who worked hard struggling to make ends meet, and she called for a change in how our economic system works. Part of Shepard's argument seems to be, "see, if I can do it, anybody else can do it too." At the beginning of the book, he sees his own perspective, advantages, and life experience as the norm. He is an educated white male athlete, strong, in his early 20s, who was raised in a nice suburb and is very healthy. He says he identifies with no political group, and believes therefore his approach and analysis will be free of bias. There is a strong self-assuredness here that is both a folly and strength of youth.

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