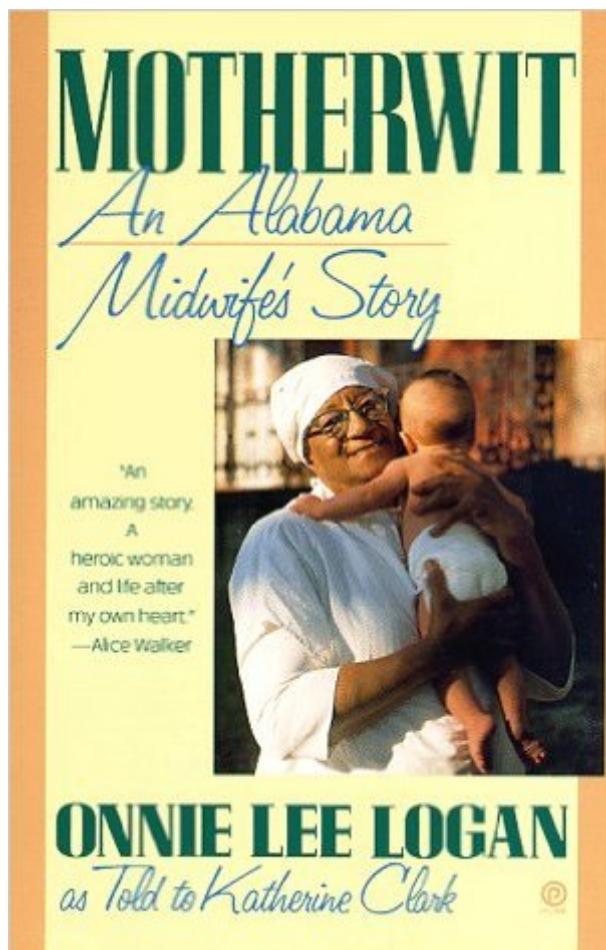


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# Motherwit: An Alabama Midwife's Story



## **Synopsis**

"Motherwit" and "common sense" were the watchwords of Onnie Lee Logan's career as a lay midwife in Mobile County, Alabama. Although she received little formal education, endured the Depression and faced a racist society, Onnie Lee Logan experienced her life as the triumphant fulfillment of a dream to be one of those who could bring babies into the world, as her mother and grandmother had done before her. Her story, told in the soft, now vanishing dialect of the Deep South, is powerful and fascinating oral history. Motherwit follows her life through her work as a servant for a wealthy Mobile family, her troubled marriage during the Depression, and her struggle to become a licensed midwife. We watch as she delivers the babies of both black and white women of Alabama--losing only one baby in 40 years. Onnie Lee Logan's forbearance in the face of the crushing prejudice of the rural South makes inspiring and unforgettable reading. When she passed away in 1995, the New York Times declared her a "folk hero," and Time called her book "a feminist classic." Filled with startling drama and profound wisdom, Motherwit is an important contribution to African-American history. "An amazing story. A heroic woman and life after my own heart." Alice Walker "To have told her own story, to have borne this eloquent witness to her life is Onnie Lee Logan's final triumph." Ellen Douglas in the Washington Post Book World "Oral history doesn't come much better than this." Booklist "Beautiful...her passion rings through in every line." Los Angeles Times --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

In 1996, while pregnant with my first child, I was researching the different options available to me for

childbirth. I read book after book, borrowing them one after another from my local library. Only in my first trimester, I had already been told by my OBGyn that I had a 1 in 4 chance of C-Section "just because that's the way it is." There HAD to be another way, so I searched. Then I came upon THIS book. Far from being an argument for a method or an analytical textbook, Motherwit was an intensely tender, human story that made childbirth come alive for me. This book fed my soul as I laughed and cried my way through it. When I was done, I knew how I wanted my baby to come into this world: with a midwife. I've never forgotten it... and after all these years, 2 children later, I'm buying my own copy, so my daughter can read it too, when her time comes. I'd rather have a woman like Onnie there with me, than any Ph.D. Both of my children were born peacefully. Both came with the help of midwives like Onnie Lee.

Motherwit is a fascinating glimpse into the life of Onnie Lee Logan, Alabama's last "granny midwife". She is a wise and skillful midwife, meeting the needs of Merengo County, one of the poorest in Alabama. Her service to the black population is at first appreciated, because the doctors weren't interested in treating them. As midwifery and homebirth grows more popular, many well-off white couples hire her to deliver their babies at home, and soon she and her fellow midwives are no longer granted liscences to practice midwifery. The midwife will enjoy Onnie Lee's wisdom and compassion in caring for her clients; the African-American will appreciate her struggles to claim her place of service to her community. Christians will appreciate Onnie's frank faith in God, Who called her to midwifery and designed to process of birthing babies.

This book reminded me of the question, "If someone wrote your life story, would anyone read it?" Well, here is one person who lived a rather normal life and her story is no great Earth shaking drama, just her getting on with her life and doing what God wants her to do. From the book cover, ect., a lot of people want to read her story, so, in as much as we are all special and do special things in our lives, maybe not worthy of great notice, but worthy of note, yes, if someone wrote about any of us, people would want to read it. Ms. Logan tells about her life growing up, becoming a midwife and how she learned to midwife the best. She had the great privilege and advantage of wonderful parents who taught her to live by God's word, be humble, giving and to not try to be 'white'. There are some seriously sad parts in this story, but they are part and parcel of being black and human in this country. The most important part of her story is what she wanted to pass on to future generations on how to be a better midwife. She had learned a lot from God's directions (when she needed some, He gave her some directions) and from her own experiences. All in all, she has

had a wonderful life and is glad to have lived it. This book is a joy to read.

AS AN ASPIRING MIDWIFE AND FELLOW CHRISTIAN I WAS AMAZED AT THE CANDOR AND EASE WITH WHICH LOGAN LED US THROUGH 70 YEARS OF HER LIFE. HER STORIES TAUGHT WAYS TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS THAT ARISE OCCASIONALLY DURING NORMAL HOME BIRTH. HER CONSTANT DEVOTION TO GOD WAS VERY UPLIFTING!

I purchased this book because it was required for a doula training that I completed. At first I was skeptical that a memoir/oral history would be helpful, but I was pleasantly surprised. In fact, I think I gained more from this book than I did from any of the (excellent) "how-to" type books about labor and delivery that were recommended. The book tells the story of Onnie Lee Logan, one of the last African American "granny" midwives, in her own words. Often vilified by the white medical establishment, the "granny" midwives played a vital role in the health of African Americans in the south up through the latter half of the 20th century. Ms. Logan's knowledge, skill and passion shine through on every page. Some of her stories had me on the edge of my seat. Her strong sense of midwifery as her spiritual vocation was inspiring. A must-read for anyone interested in the history of medicine, childbirth, women's studies and African-American history.

Good book. Great history of a lay midwife who actually delivered babies in her off hours while working as a maid for a family in the deep south. She gives us several stories of her actual NB deliveries and was finally forced to retire at the young age of 80! I enjoyed reading her rendition of her life, and writing her life in her own words without a ghost writer.

Amazingly enough, I started reading this book because I am pregnant and planning my second homebirth. I was shocked to realize the ties that bind me to this remarkable woman. I was born in South Alabama hospital in mobile county. Soon after my last homebirth I had an in depth conversation with one of my aunts, now about 75 years old who had all 9 of her children at home....within reach of Mrs. Logan. Being that she was a very poor young black mother in those days it's quite likely that Ms. Onnie was her midwife. I will be sure to talk to all my elders when I visit mobile again and see just how many of them knew and loved her and how many of my cousins she delivered.

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