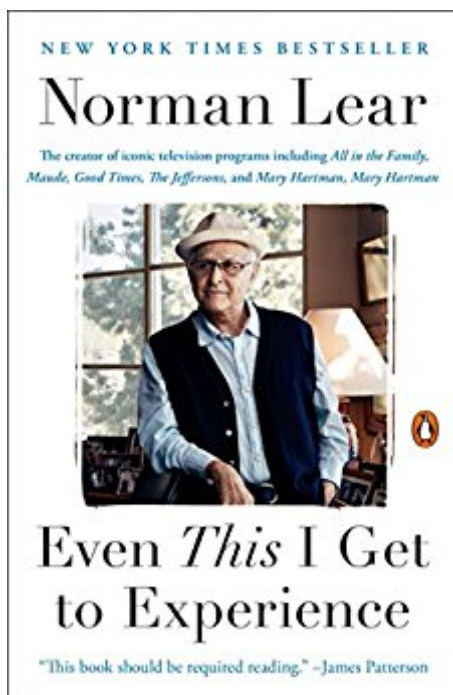


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# Even This I Get To Experience



## Synopsis

"This is, flat out, one of the best Hollywood memoirs ever written. An absolute treasure."

--Booklist (STARRED) In my ninety-plus years I've lived a multitude of lives. In the course of all these lives, I had a front-row seat at the birth of television; wrote, produced, created, or developed more than a hundred shows; had nine on the air at the same time; founded the 300,000-member liberal advocacy group People For the American Way; was labeled the "no. 1 enemy of the American family" by Jerry Falwell; made it onto Richard Nixon's "Enemies List"; was presented with the National Medal of the Arts by President Clinton; purchased an original copy of the Declaration of Independence and toured it for ten years in all fifty states; blew a fortune in a series of bad investments in failing businesses; and reached a point where I was informed we might even have to sell our home. Having heard that we'd fallen into such dire straits, my son-in-law phoned me and asked how I was feeling. My answer was, "Terrible, of course, but then I added, "but I must be crazy, because despite all that's happened, I keep hearing this inner voice saying, "Even this I get to experience." Norman Lear's work is legendary. The renowned creator of such iconic television programs as All in the Family; Maude; Good Times; The Jeffersons; and Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman, Lear remade our television culture from the ground up. At their peak, his programs were viewed by 120 million people a week, with stories that dealt with the most serious issues of the day—racism, poverty, abortion—yet still left audiences howling with laughter. In EVEN THIS I GET TO EXPERIENCE, Lear opens up with all the candor, humor, and wisdom to be expected from one of America's greatest living storytellers. But TV and politics are only a fraction of the tale. Lear's early years were grounded in the harshness of the Great Depression, and further complicated by his parents' vivid personalities. The imprisonment of Lear's father, a believer in the get-rich-quick scheme, colored his son's childhood. During this absence, Lear's mother left her son to live with relatives. Lear's comic gifts were put to good use during this hard time, even as they would be decades later during World War II, when Lear produced and staged a variety show for his fellow airmen in addition to flying fifty bombing missions. After the war, Lear tried his hand at publicity in New York before setting out for Los Angeles in 1949. A lucky break had a powerful agent in the audience the night Danny Thomas performed a nightclub routine written by Lear, and within days his career in television began. Before long his work with Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis (and later Martha Raye and George Gobel) made him the highest-paid comedy writer in the country, and he was spending his summers with the likes of Carl Reiner and Mel Brooks. Movies

followed, and soon he was making films starring Frank Sinatra, Dick Van Dyke, and Jason Robards. Then came the 1970s, and Lear's unprecedented string of TV hits. Married three times and the father of six children ranging in age from nineteen to sixty-eight, Lear's penetrating look at family life, parenthood, and marriage is a volume in itself. A memoir as touching, funny, and remarkable as any of Lear's countless artistic creations, **EVEN THIS I GET TO EXPERIENCE** is nothing less than a profound gift, endlessly readable and characteristically unforgettable.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A true Hollywood legend! While the book does talk at length about Hollywood don't expect it to be a tell-all trash feast. Lear (as always) tells it like it is but doesn't reveal all that many secrets about the people we've all been watching onscreen most if not all of our lives. However, he does share a lot of fascinating tidbits about how the shows themselves were created week by week and how they

struggled with the network censors. Even though I'm a bit of a Hollywood fanatic I wasn't disappointed with the lack of dirty little secrets because hearing the inner workings of my favorite shows is still incredible. Making the connections between his shows and his life was just as interesting. For me, I was also curious to read how much his father still effects this "ninety-something". More style and substance than most Hollywood memoirs overall it is a great read.

Truly brilliant in its honesty as one would expect from the man who transformed television from a myopic center of banality into a medium of accountability. All of the major controversies that confront us today, from war and peace on through race relations, gay rights, gender equality, freedom of and from religion, economic inequality, the right and obligation to challenge power and the powerful, and the reality that the American ideal would always be a work in progress was brought into the American home by this genius. From the first pages of this book, one is made aware that he did all that because he has lived his near century on this earth as a constant challenge to find justice as well as joy in all of his actions both private and public. I first met Norman Lear more than 30 years ago interviewing him for the Los Angeles Times when he told me there was no reason to fear failure as a writer because "you can always put another blank piece of paper in the typewriter and get it right," which is what he has once again done in what may be his best work ever.

Norman Lear is a force of nature. He had a crappy childhood which is a gift to an artistic person. Throughout his life, he's been creative, innovative, driven, and - he freely admits - lucky. I enjoyed, in the first part of the book, reading about the weirdness of his family, and his feelings at the time. He was tenacious and funny in overcoming many obstacles to follow his dreams. I was rooting for that engaging kid. However, at a certain point in the book, after he became successful, my interest flagged a bit, because now it's just a chronology of his continuing successes. He wrote this script, hired these people, bonded with those people, etc. What made this otherwise placid section interesting was his revelations about the personalities of the actors and famous people he worked with, like Frank Sinatra, Jerry Lewis, Carroll O'Connor, Bea Arthur, and Jean Stapleton. One of the most interesting parts was about All in the Family, and Lear's other creations of the time; it was groundbreaking TV and there were so many obstacles. Getting past the purity police, for example; or the way some of the actors began to drink their own Kool-Aid and take on a mission within their fictional role, making it harder to get them to play their parts. What I was less enthralled with was the

fact that, for me (although others may disagree), Lear wasn't highly introspective. He says, toward the end of the book, that he lacked emotional intelligence, but even then, he didn't go much of anywhere with it. One reason I bought the book - hardcover, yet! - was to learn what a brilliant 92-year-old might have to say about growing older. Although Norman Lear wasn't sufficiently articulate on this point, everything about this book is inspiring. He makes mistakes and learns from them. He's self-deprecating if unreconstructed. He's tears-rolling-down-the-face patriotic. And by finding another gear at 70, he demonstrates the power of not letting oneself be defined by external forces. So, ultimately, I was able to take away from my reading two things: an enjoyable read and a sense of empowerment. Well worth my money and time. Norman Lear is an American treasure, and I'm glad he took the time to write this book.

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