



My Mother Was Nuts

Penny Marshall

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Most people know Penny Marshall as the director of *Big* and *A League of Their Own*. What they don't know is her trailblazing career was a happy accident. In this funny and intimate memoir, Penny takes us from the stage of *The Jackie Gleason Show* in 1955 to Hollywood's star-studded sets, offering up some hilarious detours along the way.

My Mother Was Nuts is an intimate backstage pass to Penny's personal life, her breakout role on *The Odd Couple*, her exploits with Cindy Williams and John Belushi, and her travels across Europe with Art Garfunkel on the back of a motorcycle. We see Penny get married. And divorced. And married again (the second time to Rob Reiner). We meet a young Carrie Fisher, whose close friendship with Penny has spanned decades. And we see Penny at work with Tom Hanks, Mark Wahlberg, Whoopi Goldberg, Robert De Niro, and Whitney Houston.

Throughout it all, from her childhood spent tap dancing in the Bronx, to her rise as the star of *Laverne & Shirley*, Penny lived by simple rules: "try hard, help your friends, don't get too crazy, and have fun." With humor and heart, *My Mother Was Nuts* reveals there's no one else quite like Penny Marshall.

My Mother Was Nuts Details

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Author : Penny Marshall

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From Reader Review My Mother Was Nuts for online ebook

Naksed says

My first experience with an audio book was terrible so I approached the audio version of Hollywood actress, director and humorist Penny Marshall with weariness, especially when she began her very first chapter, the tale of two ninjas. But it was perfect! I loved her raspy voice, New York accent and deadpan voice. It was like listening to a really long, really in-depth episode of Inside the Actors Studio.

The first half of the book concentrates on her nutty mother. It is a no holds barred approach to her parent's dysfunctional marriage and Penny's difficult childhood. When she was a kid, Penny asked her mother what she wanted for Christmas, and mom replied that her preferred gift would be for Penny NOT to get her father anything he likes. Get the picture? Mom also kept a suicide jar in her closet. She constantly put down her daughter.

This isn't a "mommy dearest" memoir though. Penny is self introspective and fair and recalls both good and bad. Despite her failings, her mother instilled in Penny a love of entertaining people, the necessity of putting heart in your performance, and of course, the importance of being bold. Long after her mother's death, her influence is present in Penny's life as she navigates the stormy currents of Hollywood, fame, drugs, and personal life.

The second half of the book has behind the scenes tidbits on some of her most famous movies, including Big, A League of Their Own, Awakenings, and The Preacher's Wife, which is what I love so much in these types of memoirs. Not only does she share the technical aspects of filmmaking, the odd twists and turns of the casting process (Robert De Niro as the potential lead in Big ???!!) but she also gives insight into the personal lives of celebrities without resorting to vulgar gossip, speculation or settling scores. Class all the way.

Highly recommend these memoirs for any fans of the movies and people who can appreciate her dry New York style sense of humor.

Troy Blackford says

Wow. I'll say right off the bat that I don't know much about Penny Marshall. At least, I didn't before I read this book. I have never seen one episode of Laverne and Shirley. I haven't seen any of the movies she's directed since I was a kid. In fact, I didn't even realize she WAS the director for 'Big' or 'A League of Their Own' until I read the description of this book. Why did I read the book then, you might ask? Well, it was on sale for very cheap. Once I saw she had directed a few classics, I thought hearing about it might be interesting. So I got the book and gave it a chance.

Interesting isn't even the right word. It was crazy.

She starts the book off with a bang describing how she was once robbed by ninjas in her own home. Seriously. Complete with police helicopters right above her dwelling. And it really happened.

In fact, much of her life is insane stuff that sounds made up but actually really happened. She knew virtually everybody you've ever heard of. The story of how she 'broke into' show business is probably enough to make failed actors want to pull their hair out - she never seemed to want to be an actress until she already was one.

Throughout this book, I was consistently amazed at the experiences she led and the stuff she has done.

And the people - she mentions so many people in this book it will make your head spin. And, because she was close to so many of them and worked with them closely, it never feels like name dropping. A lot of people couldn't pull that off, but Penny Marshall does.

In short, I sure as hell got my dollar ninety-five out of this book. And then some. It was far more entertaining and interesting than I was prepared for. Recommended.

Barbara says

3.5 stars

I listened to the audio version of this book, narrated by the author in her unmistakable deep voice and New York accent.

Penny Marshall was born to Marjorie and Tony Marshall in 1943. Her show business career started in Marjorie's dancing school in the basement of their Bronx, New York apartment building. Young Penny, who wanted to run around the neighborhood and do her own thing, grumbled mightily about the mandatory dance lessons. However the numerous performances staged by Marjorie gave Penny confidence and stage experience.

Though Marjorie Marshall loved doing shows Penny didn't become a child actress. She drifted through school and graduated with less than stellar grades. After searching for a suitable college Penny chose the University of New Mexico, which had a very lenient acceptance policy. Penny was surprised by her mom's acquiescence to this distant school....but came to realize that her mother thought all the "New" states (New York, New Jersey, New Hampshire, New Mexico) were clustered together. Ha ha ha. In any case, Penny headed west.

Penny liked college, especially partying and hanging out with the football team. Before long Penny - who was a little naive about sex - was pregnant. Soon afterward she was married and living in a cramped apartment with her husband Mickey and baby girl Tracy. The marriage soon foundered and twenty-year-old Penny lit out for Los Angeles, where her brother Garry Marshall was becoming a successful writer/producer/director and her sister Ronny was a producer and actress. Penny was an indifferent mother and left little Tracy with Micky and his parents in Albuquerque. I was put off by Penny's casual attitude about her child....but mother and daughter grew closer when Tracy grew up.

In Los Angeles Penny, helped by her brother Garry, got small parts in various movies and TV sitcoms. Penny married Rob Reiner (star of "All in the Family") in 1971 and they bought a nice home where they entertained family and friends - including many Hollywood bigwigs and celebrities. Over the course of her career Penny seems to have met almost everyone in show business (*she names names.....lots and lots of names*), and many of these folks became her close friends. People were always welcome to drop by Penny's house to eat, drink, do drugs, and sleep over....and some guests stayed for months (or even years). I thought this was very generous.

In 1976 Penny landed a role in "Laverne and Shirley" - she played "Laverne" and Cindy Williams played "Shirley." The program became a runaway success and Penny talks about the scripts, cast, crew, filming, locations, etc. She also mentions how pleased she was to be able to hire friends who needed a job. Cindy

Williams left the show in Season 8, after which the two women didn't speak for 15 years. Penny was bewildered by Cindy's actions and suggests that Cindy's husband, Bill Hudson (Goldie Hawn's ex), wanted her to quit. It's not clear exactly what happened but Penny never badmouths her co-star. In fact this isn't a 'tell-all' book at all and Penny doesn't 'dish the dirt' on anyone.

Penny and Rob divorced in 1980, a few years before "Laverne and Shirley" ended. This was a difficult period in Penny's life. Afterwards she turned to directing movies. Penny goes into great detail about each movie she helmed, including who auditioned for the leading roles, how the stars were chosen, the film crews she selected, and all the nitty gritty of movie making. I found all this very absorbing and these were my favorite parts of the book.

Penny generously acknowledges the professionals (including Steven Spielberg) who helped her learn the craft and expresses no bitterness about being overlooked - again and again - for (well deserved) Oscar nominations. Penny says she's satisfied doing the work she loves and entertaining people. The movies Penny directed are: "Jumpin' Jack Flash" (I love that movie); "Big"; "Awakenings"; "A League of Their Own"; "Renaissance Man"; "The Preacher's Wife"; and "Riding in Cars With Boys." Penny also made a documentary about basketball player Dennis Rodman, called "Rodman Rebound."

Penny's personal life was eclectic and intriguing. She talks about flings with various beaus and a long romance with singer/songwriter Art Garfunkel. Penny also traveled all over the world; threw numerous joint birthday parties with Carrie Fisher (featuring fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, and a roster of A-list guests); mourned the deaths of friends; welcomed the birth of grandchildren; took care of her aging parents; repeatedly went to the Pritikin Spa to get healthy and stop smoking (the smoking part didn't work); obtained season tickets to the Lakers and the Clippers; and much more. Penny also speaks about her 2010 diagnosis of lung cancer - which spread to her brain. Penny reports that - right after she heard the news - she asked someone to go out and buy her White Castle hamburgers. The actress glosses over the illness but mentions that she went into remission after treatment.

I enjoyed Penny's book and think it would be fun to join her for pizza (or hamburgers) and beer and hear more stories about television, movies, and Hollywood personalities. This is a fun light book that I'd recommend to fans of celebrity memoirs.

You can follow my reviews at <http://reviewsbybarbsaffer.blogspot.com/>

Sarah says

Caveat lector. Let the reader beware. Penny Marshall's memoir, "My Mother Was Nuts," provides the proverbial "Penny" for your thoughts. She lays bare her life as a child, young adult, mother, actress, and director in this starkly candid first-person account. Much of the narrative's early chapters adopt a sarcastic attitude that almost verges on indifference but which simultaneously employs humor, which forms a mainstay throughout the book. As Penny herself states, she "didn't stop for nothing." Her gregarious, blunt manner—including the rather fluent use of profanity—may require some adjustment on the reader's part as Penny truly tells it like it is in a very matter-of-fact approach. Although the memoir contains a rather deprecatory tone, there is nevertheless an irrepressible undercurrent of resilience which is augmented by Penny's reaction to her circumstances, both positive and negative.

Marshall's memoir combines quirky chapter titles such as "What Did 'Ya Expect—Hedy Lamarr?" and "Forget the Gas, I Want the Jell-O" with more than forty black-and-white photographs, creating a notable montage. Expect to find the good mixed with the bad as Penny discusses her marriages and subsequent

divorces, her recreational drug use, and her rocky relationship with her parents, particularly her mother. Her own motherhood she sums up by saying, “My mother hadn’t been June Cleaver, and I wasn’t Mrs. Brady.” Regardless, there is still much to admire about this well-known Hollywood figure, from her unwavering loyalty and honesty to her uncompromising character. This memoir will introduce readers to the true Penny Marshall, whose philosophy may be best expressed in her own words: “Often the point was to live and see what happened.”

Bonnie says

I see the majority of reviews on Amazon's were disappointed in this but I felt quite differently. As I've made my way through her audiobook, which is read by her, I sense that hearing her voice provides a sense of depth and sincerity that perhaps others can't possibly grasp in a book or on a screen. Her intonation lends tremendous expression and comes off with complete sincerity. Throughout, she notes how important honesty is to her and she certainly seems to mean it given the numerous examples she provides that support this very statement. Penny was a girl who grew up in a very tough home environment; she escaped mentally via her neighborhood friends and activities they shared. I found her as one who is extremely loyal and devoted to her friends, and she has many. She and her siblings remained very close, I believe, due to the instability they shared in their youth at home. They formed a tight bond of psychological survival. This played out in some of the decisions she made, some not so good, perhaps due to lack of maturity (unexpected pregnancy and dependency on the grandparents to help raise her daughter) and other decisions served her well, especially those due to her brother's generosity and good fortune, which essentially opened numerous doors and connections for her. She is blessed with having the type of personality that clearly draws people to her, which helped her enormously in a very competitive Hollywood industry. Yes, she was wild and crazy during her younger years but, in truth, those were the times in which she lived and I can only imagine these were intensified under the Hollywood lights. She shares her regrets, too. I'd say, give this piece a chance on audiobook. I am finding that I don't want it to end. I really have enjoyed hearing some of the "behind the scenes" stories she tells about numerous shows, stars, etc. It really gives an inside look at what a competitive industry she is part of. Also, you get a sense of the young girl who was a bit of jock continuing to live vicariously through sports idols as a diehard fan. Congrats, Penny, on a very interesting piece of work and thanks for sharing it with those of us who appreciate what you've been through and brought us over the years!

Roz Warren says

FIFTEEN THINGS I LEARNED ABOUT PENNY MARSHALL FROM HER NEW MEMOIR “MY MOTHER WAS NUTS.”

As a child, Penny Marshall danced on “The Jackie Gleason Show.”

June Taylor told Marshall that she had the potential to become a June Taylor dancer if she took ballet. But she didn’t because she hated ballet.

Her grandfather died while she was at summer camp, but her folks didn’t tell her because they didn’t want to ruin her summer.

Early in her career, she was in a Head and Shoulders commercial with Farrah Fawcett. Penny played the

from the Amazon Kindle library. Whew!

Now I must go read a classic to make up for the pain I inflicted on my intellect with this travesty of a book.

Stephanie says

I don't know what compelled me to read Penny Marshall's autobiography, "My Mother Was Nuts," as I was not a fan of Laverne and Shirley, and have only seen a handful of the movies that she has directed. Reading her memoir, I learned that she parlayed nepotism (her brother is the television director, Garry Marshall) into a long and satisfying career. There are some charming anecdotes, like when she pitched Jack Klugman, the role of Oscar in "The Odd Couple," when she let Arlyn Dunetz crash on her floor (Dunetz went off with a guy in a van, moved to a commune, changed her name to Phoenix, and then gave birth to 7 kids, including River, Rain and Leaf), and when she enjoyed an impromptu concert performed by Paul Simon, then dating her best friend, Carrie Fisher, and Art Garfunkel, with whom Penny had a satisfying relationship after her divorce from Rob Reiner. She name drops shamelessly, everyone from talent, such as Albert Brooks, Jim Brooks, John Belushi, Steven Spielberg, Robert De Niro, and Tom Hanks, to suits, such as Barry Diller and Ronald Perelman, but there is no gossip. Everyone is talented and generous in Penny's world. She is superficial even when recounting her own life. For example, she never addresses her feelings about allowing her former in-laws to raise her only child, nor does she say much about her divorce from Reiner. If you want a laundry list of who's who in Hollywood without any dirt, this is your book.

Barbara says

I was disappointed in this book. I decided to read it as I have been a fan of Penny Marshall since her Laverne and Shirley days. I have also noticed she produced a few good movies, so therefore I thought it would be an interesting read.

As I stated previously, I was disappointed. I don't feel she positively portrayed her family, which is her own right. However, I know that I wouldn't think of writing anything for the public to read that would be a bad reflection of my family. I learned her idea of family is very skewed, and it put her in a very different light for me personally.

Having said that, the annoyance of the book to me was her constant name dropping of famous people. After awhile, I felt that the book was just short skits of name dropping that discussed short spans of time she worked with these people. There was honestly no rhyme or reason to the snip its, she put in the book. I was on the verge of not finishing the book, because unfortunately I could not want for it to end.

I would not recommend this book. It is long, drawn out and I didn't feel like I accomplished anything by reading it.

Mark Johnson says

This is an excellent autobiography. Despite what some of the reviews would have you believe, Ms Marshall seems completely aware of the mistakes she made, she just doesn't come across as needing to beat herself up publicly to receive public approval for her contrition. Anyone with two brain cells to run together to make a mental spark could tell, while reading the first two chapters, that Ms Marshall did not hate her mother. She saw her mother as flawed, but she didn't see herself as perfect. She doesn't come across to me as ignorant of her own flaws, simply not asking for our forgiveness, just as she didn't offer her own forgiveness to her own

mother.

Here's a novel concept for an autobiography. Write about what happened in your life without seeking praise or forgiveness or anything else from the public. If your life is interesting, and your autobiography is well written, then you'll have a great autobiography. I believe that Penny Marshall has written an excellent autobiography. She's not perfect and she not a saint, but she is in no way claiming to be either.

If you liked Laverne and Shirley or her work on The Odd Couple or any of the movies that Penny Marshall has directed, then I think you'll enjoy this book. It's simple. This isn't a masterpiece, but it's funny, laugh out loud in public funny, and I really recommend it.

Jennifer ~ TarHeelReader says

Honest, compelling, laugh out loud funny, and tender, this audio was excellent. I rarely give an audiobook 5 stars; however, when read by the author about her own life, with sincerity, with actual sorrow in her voice when she spoke of the loss of her loved ones, with real humor at life's funny moments, I felt like Penny Marshall put her entire heart into both writing AND narrating this book. Penny covers it all, from her early life in the Bronx, her quirky parents, her loyal brother helping her enter into the industry, to her love life and lost loves (I never knew she dated Art Garfunkel!), her friendship with Carrie Fisher, to Laverne and Shirley, and to all the movies she has directed. By the the time I watched Laverne and Shirley, it was in syndication. I grew up loving Laverne and Penny, both, for their realness with a big side of silliness. And that's exactly what this audio is- real, funny at times, and always full of heart.

Dale says

Published by Brilliance Audio in September of 2012.

Read by the author, Penny Marshall

Duration: 8 hours, 30 minutes.

Unabridged.

Penny Marshall, best known as Laverne DeFazio on the TV show Laverne and Shirley, tells all (or at least a lot) in this name-dropping memoir. If you are offended by frequent use of curse words and references to drug use, this is not your book.

Let me begin with an important point in my review: I listened to it as an audiobook that was read by Penny Marshall. This is important because I think it added immensely to the experience despite Marshall's relatively poor reading style. She mumbles, slurs words throughout and pauses at weird moments to take a breath but that is part of Penny Marshall's style. On top of that, at emotional moments, such as the death of her mother and discussing the 9/11 attacks the listener can hear the emotion in her voice. Add to that her famed New York accent, her great impersonation of her brother Garry (creator of Happy Days and Laverne and Shirley among other shows) Lorne Michaels (creator of Saturday Night Live) and Robert DeNiro and you have an enjoyable experience.

Read more at: <http://dwdsreviews.blogspot.com/2013/...>

Filip says

I should stop reading showbiz memoirs. Invariably, I tend to find them boring and self-serving and the authors self-centered name-dropping control freaks. But probably that's the kind of person that makes it to the top of the showbiz career ladder (Joan Rivers, if you're reading this, you're the exception - I loved your latest book. But then you didn't exactly make it to the very pinnacle of showbiz, did you). In this case, I disliked Penny Marshall and her book even more than usual. Almost every sentence in this book serves either to exonerate her for mishaps to her costars or to indicate that she has been right all along, trying to make the reader believe that her career was a combination of nepotism (she'll admit to that) and sheer luck. I enjoyed the first chapters on growing up in the Bronx with a showbiz mom, but after that the narrative became too sloppy, with its baby boomer navel-gazing and focus on people that were allegedly big in the '70s but have since had little relevance (to me, at least). To avoid.
