

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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★ **Even This I Get to Experience.**

Lear, Norman (Author)

Oct 2014. 444 p. Penguin, hardcover, \$32.95. (9781594205729). 070.195.

This is, flat out, one of the best Hollywood memoirs ever written. In most Hollywood bios, we skip through a lot of sections, waiting to get to the good stuff, but here it's all good stuff. Lear, the creator of the classic TV series *All in the Family* and *Maude* (among many, many others), had numerous jobs before he fell into television writing: he was a PR man, a door-to-door salesman, an inventor, a radio operator aboard a B-17 bomber, and each of these stages of his early life easily could be a book unto itself, so entertainingly does Lear write about them. And the story of how he came to be one of television's top producers reads like the script for a really good movie: Lear teams up with a buddy to write comic songs; they parlay this into a gig writing sketches and routines for Danny Thomas, which leads to writing full-time for legends like Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis, which leads (for Lear, anyway) to writing movie scripts, which leads to Lear's changing the landscape of television in the 1970s with his truly revolutionary approach to the types of characters and themes that could appear on the small screen.

Now in his nineties, Lear writes about his own life with a sort of "can you believe it?" approach, and at times you can see him opening new doors in his own memory (as, for example, when he realizes that he's spent most of his life trying to whitewash the truth about his father, who was a fraud and a liar but also a pretty likable guy). An absolute treasure.

— *David Pitt*