



Hello Darlin': Tall (and Absolutely True) Tales about My Life

Larry Hagman , Todd Gold

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On November 21, 1980, over 350 million people worldwide tuned in to find out: "Who shot J.R.?" In portraying the scheming, ruthless J.R. in "Dallas" during its entire run, from 1978 to 1991, Larry Hagman reached a level of fame and recognition that is rare, if not unique. Now the man behind J.R. tells his own story in an autobiography that is at once rowdy and moving, self-searching and scandalous, juicy and a "recovery story" -- and often outrageously funny.

Though Larry Hagman is best known for his starring roles in two hugely successful -- and very different -- television series, "I Dream of Jeannie" and "Dallas, " his life has been a star act from birth.

Born to the theatrical purple as the son of the legendary Mary Martin, Larry Hagman received his first exposure to the heady world of show business through her -- as well as experiencing a childhood that was lavish and glamorous and full of problems. His father was a tough, smart, wealthy Texas lawyer (sound familiar?), his mother Broadway's most beloved leading lady, and the young Larry Hagman was torn between their two very different worlds. After his parents' marriage ended, he was shunted from one boarding school to another, trying to satisfy his father's expectations by working as a cowboy, hunting, and raising hell and still to live up to his mother's expectations in the world of the theater.

In the end, theater won out, and, following his mother's example, he began to pursue a career as an actor. Following a stint in a soap opera, he got his big break with "I Dream of Jeannie, " and from that came instant fame and celebrity, from which he never looked back. Weaving hilarious (and often scandalous) stories about his early years in show business into a personal story that is breathlessly engaging, Larry Hagman shares his behind-the-scenes life with the reader, his star-studded cast of characters including Linda Gray, Victoria Principal, Barbara Eden, Jean Arthur, and Joan Collins, not to mention George C. Scott, Burgess Meredith, Joshua Logan, Jack Nicholson, Sidney Lumet, and Valerie Perrine, to name only a few.

But with the success came many temptations, a few of which Larry Hagman succumbed to, and about which he writes candidly and unsparingly in this memoir, including his battle with drugs and alcohol and his subsequent recovery.

It was as J.R., however, in the phenomenally successful series "Dallas" (the second longest-running TV drama in history), that Hagman earned his greatest fame. Taking the reader behind the scenes, he shares many stories of ego clashes, offscreen relationships, and flamboyant behavior during his work on that series -- and the pain he experienced as drugs and alcohol began to take their toll. In fact the greatest drama in Larry Hagman's life -- after his long, loving, and successful marriage to his wife, Maj -- came when he was diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver and entered into a race against time to find a liver donor.

The "recovery" side of his story is not something he takes for granted, having overcome two addictions as well as undergoing a liver transplant in 1995 and a subsequent near-fatal motorcycle accident. His account of these difficulties is at once unflinchingly courageous and matter-of-fact and will be a source of inspiration to many readers. Despite problems that would have stopped most people, Larry Hagman continues to work on television and in film (he made a brilliant appearance in Mike Nichols's film about presidential ambition, "Primary Colors") and enjoys life hugely.

Dishy, witty, frank, and unsparing of Larry Hagman himself and of others, "Hello Darlin'" is, like its author, destined for international fame -- a rare memoir by a show-business celebrity that not only makes us laugh, applaud, and cry, but also leaves us with respect and admiration for a man who can not only tell a good story about others, but reveal something of himself.

Hello Darlin': Tall (and Absolutely True) Tales about My Life Details

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Jason says

3.5 stars rounded up to four, really. Come on, Goodreads. Get on this half-star thing.

Daddy got this for me for Christmas. Normally when he goes off-list with anything it's a disaster, but he scored a hit with this one. (It's also normally a disaster if he tries to stay on list, but that's a different story). I've been an avid *DALLAS* fan since TNN started showing reruns when I was in college in the mid/late 90s. I even had pictures of the cast members up on my bulletin board as if they were members of the family. Friends thought I was strange, and they were probably right. Anyway, JR was my favorite character, and Larry Hagman has always intrigued me.

I normally don't care much for biographies, autobiographies, or memoirs, but I had no problem getting into this one. I had been reading a book that belonged to great-granddaddy, but one trip away from the house in my bag (for I never leave the house without a book) convinced me that I should read that book only at home lest I inadvertently tear it all to pieces, no matter how carefully I tried to pack it. I picked up this one, and the result was that I read it through to the end without going back to the other one whether I was at home or not. It's a quick and easy read.

I was surprised to find that the part of the book I enjoyed the most was the journey up to his *DALLAS* days. The stories about when he was poor, some shenanigans he was involved in, et cetera, are most amusing, and I even chuckled out loud a few times. Truth truly is stranger than fiction, and you can't make some of this stuff up. Hagman certainly isn't a boring character. He has some elements of JR in his character, as far as cheating the system when it's convenient, but he isn't mean or evil at all. In fact, making money was completely secondary to him and just something that kind of happened after *DALLAS* got started. Regardless, he was in the field of acting for the love of it primarily, and I think that's pretty cool.

He's also a champion of several causes, some of which I believe in, others not, but nobody cares about that. I think it's cool that he's passionate about something and he goes for it. I also like that he's one who speaks his mind, but also puts thought into what he's saying or doing. Even if I don't agree with all of his views, he can explain why he has those views and isn't just spouting off a bunch of mindless nonsense. (It is well thought-out nonsense.) I'm glad I read this book and got a better understanding of the man behind the image he portrayed. I loved his stories of growing up and getting started in the industry, and that made the first 200 pages a pure pleasure to read. The last 70 were fine as well, but not as great as the fun stories found earlier on. He now had money to do anything he wanted, championed a bunch of causes, talked a lot about his liver transplant, and so on. I think anyone who likes good stories would enjoy those first 200 pages, and suggest that they check this book out, and then just finish it because it's proper to do so.

Jennifer says

As a long-time Dallas fan, I thoroughly enjoyed this book.

Xena Raider says

I adored Major Nelson from Jeannie so much that he seemed perfect. It was a surprise to read that Larry Hagman was just another actor with a privileged life who did not appreciate this until later in life.

Tedsandi2000 Kinghorn says

I was never a big fan of I Dream of Jeannie and did not watch Dallas. However, I saw a special on TV about popular series and decided Hagman looked interesting. He is! He has a delightful sense of humor and is self deprecating. His stories are concise and never mean. He is surprisingly kind and accepting regarding his childhood. He has great anecdotes. It is a very quick, easy read.

Cari says

I grabbed this off the library shelf because I currently watch re-runs of "I Dream of Jeannie" at the gym every morning, and Hagman was HOT as a youth. He's lead an interesting life. I find it hard to believe he NEVER cheated on his wife, only because I think everyone in Hollywood probably does. But he's so open and honest about everything else, why wouldn't he be telling the truth about that, too? Anyway, good stuff.

Sarah Smith says

I ABSOLUTELY LOVED reading Larry Hagman's autobiography, "Hello Darlin': Tall (and Absolutely True) Tales About My Life." Before I read this novel, I did not hold a very high opinion as Larry Hagman as a person. I had grown up watching the comedic sitcom, "I Dream of Jeanie," and I liked Anthony "Tony" Nelson, all right; however, I could take him or leave him. Then, I watched "Dallas" for the very first time in my life. I was disappointed in Larry Hagman as I watched him portray oil "big wig," J. R. Ewing, I could not believe just how greedy, conniving, and underhanded that man was throughout each and every episode!!!! As a result of that experience watching the very few -- and oftentimes, very far between -- episodes of "Dallas," I began to equate Larry Hagman with J. R. Ewing. So, I convinced myself that I did not like ANYTHING AT ALL about this person or his famous persona.

That turned out to be a huge mistake, indeed. When a new revival of "Dallas" premiered last year, my mama and I started watching, and I was hooked in no time at all. Mama wanted to share the whole "Dallas" experience with me now that I had become acquainted with the newest generation of the Ewing family -- Christopher and John Ross. So, we began watching the original series from the very beginning of the first season together. Each and every episode that we have seen (Seasons 1, 2, & 3) has been GREAT and HIGHLY ADDICTIVE!!!! The more invested that I have become in the show, the more interested I became in the main members of the principal cast. Larry Hagman was the first person whom I researched, and the information I found showed me that I had been wrong about his true character this whole time,

Reading this autobiography has TRULY convinced me that Larry Hagman was NOTHING AT ALL like J. R. Ewing in real life. This book showed me what a kind, giving, compassionate, and loving person -- both on-screen and off-screen. He was COLOSSALLY loved and admired by his close friends, co-stars, and fans.

I was TREMENDOUSLY touched by his honesty about all the experiences and circumstances that Larry Hagman chose to include in the story of his life. Although not all the "tall tales" were upstanding, he admitted to the mistakes that he had made, and he shared all the lessons that he had learned. R.I.P. Larry Martin Hagman. You will NEVER be forgotten!!!! Your legacy will live on forever!!!!

Bill F. says

Larry Hagman is one of my all-time favorite actors. J.R. Ewing has been as much an integral part of my life as has Archie Bunker - portrayed, ironically enough, by Hagman's close friend Carroll O'Connor. Hagman's portrayal of J.R. and the phenomenon that was Dallas defined the late 1970s/early 1980s for many Americans.

But, if you are looking for tall tales about the Dallas years in Hagman's autobiography, you'll have to wait until page 181 [of a 272-page book]. The 13 years of "Dallas" zip by in Hagman's story with a few stories, opinions and recaps. Surprisingly, however, despite this you'll not be disappointed in this book. In actuality, the seemingly short-shrift given to Dallas is simply the way Hagman views his life: Dallas was but one of a string of unbelievably lucky breaks received by a man who lived an extraordinarily lucky life.

Hagman doesn't hate Dallas - far from it. He is fully aware and grateful for the tens of millions of dollars it has earned him. He can still remember being so low on money that he had to rent out his home to Peter Sellers for a month [while he and his wife, Maj slept on a mattress in Peter Fonda's office]. But Hagman's life was noteworthy before Dallas and if his post-Dallas career has been quieter, his successful recovery from a liver transplant brought him continued reknown.

And one of the most enjoyable things about the book is Hagman's seemingly endless encounters with other celebrities. Granted, with a mother as famous as Mary Martin was in her day, it's not unusual that Hagman met famous people long before he himself would reach the stage or screen. Still, Hagman's eclectic list of friends over the years - in addition to Fonda, Sellers and O'Connor - include: Ray Bradbury, Marlon Brando, Art Buchwald, David Crosby, Cary Grant, Joel Grey, Dennis Hopper, Margot Kidder, Richard Lewis, Steve McQueen, Peter Marshall, Lee Marvin, Burgess Meredith, Jack Nicholson, Charlotte Rae, George C. Scott, and last but certainly not least: The Who's Keith Moon.

The book is a quick - and funny - read. Typical is a story Hagman tells of the shitty amenities the cast of Dallas dealt with - even long after it had become a hit. One of the shittier places [pun intended] was the restrooms on set. When they put in a handicapped stall, it narrowed the other stalls to the point where no one could use them. So, everyone used the handicapped stall - no one on the cast, crew or staff were handicapped. One day, however, while Hagman was in the stall doing his business, there was a sharp bang on the stall door. "Who's in there!" the voice belonging to the 'bang' queried. "I am," said Hagman. "Who are you?!" said the voice incredulously. Hagman told him it was none of his business. This really pissed the guy off. He said that he was handicapped and needed to use the stall NOW. Hagman said he'd be happy to vacate it as soon he was finished. This led the man to threaten to call security. When Hagman got out he saw a clearly pissed off man in a wheelchair. At this point, Hagman was recognizable the world over but this man didn't recognize him. "Hey asshole," the guy said as Hagman walked out. "What's your name?" Hagman replied, "Patrick Duffy. And go fuck yourself."

Bobby Simic says

Certain autobiographies are criticism-proof simply because you like the subject/author. As a big "Dallas" fan, I would imagine my love of Larry Hagman was a source of some of my enjoyment with this read, but he actually has a great number of fun stories and anecdotes that made reading it a real pleasure. (One example, on meeting Lauren Bacall, he licked her arm.)

Mr. Hagman appears to have been a one-of-a-kind character (and also played the one-of-a-kind character, J.R. Ewing, I might add) full of joy, spirit, and nuttiness. He seemed to have appreciated all that came his way, both through luck and tenacity -- family, professional success, a second-chance on life with a new liver -- and reflects on his good fortune, radiating devilish charm, warmth and sincerity. A chatty book full of tall tales by a Texas-size personality.

Beth Rodgers says

'Hello Darlin': Tall (and Absolutely True) Tales About My Life' by Larry Hagman was a riveting read. It is truly amazing how there are some people whose lives have so much intrigue and excitement, while others have trouble recalling some of the best memories they have.

This indelibly moving and telling account of Larry Hagman's life, including his youth, his friendships, his marriage and family life, his struggles, his risks, and his successes is worth every moment spent reading it.

Fans of 'Dallas' and 'I Dream of Jeannie' will learn more about what occurred behind-the-scenes, and they will be transported into how life goes for a star. It may not always be as peachy as it might seem. Hagman's life, though, from playing Major Nelson to J.R. Ewing, among a slew of other Broadway, television, and movie roles, captures the essence of how no matter what your connections may be (his mother is Broadway star Mary Martin), you still have to give it your all and work for your stardom. He did just that, and proved that he could make it on his own.

His life with wife Maj (pronounced 'My') is chronicled, as well as their relationships with other actors and friends, including Carroll O'Connor (Archie Bunker of 'All in the Family' and Chief Bill Gillespie of 'In the Heat of the Night'), Burgess Meredith (the Penguin in the 'Batman' series and Mick in the 'Rocky' series), among a host of others, including many of the stars of 'Dallas.'

Lovers of biographies (autobiographical or not) will enjoy being able to delve deeper into Hagman's lifestyle and work ethic. A fun, engaging read that will make you think just as much as it makes you laugh.

Beth Rodgers, Author of 'Freshman Fourteen,' A Young Adult Novel

Katy says

it was a great memoir on the life of who seemed to be great man. I loved him growing up as Major Nelson and of course later as the scoundrel J.R. on Dallas. It was nice to find out how he got into the business and I also loved hearing his accounts with his mother, the iconic Mary Martin. He also seemed to have a wonderful marriage with his wife (interesting reading about their acid trips together). They were together a

long time and you usually don't see two people stick together especially at the level of success that Larry Hagman had. Great read overall!

Joe Santoro says

I don't think I've ever read an autobiography of a popular person before, but the library system popped this book up at my wife randomly, and, as I am a HUGE fan of JR Ewing (he was my hero growing up... what can I say, it was the 80s)... I figured it a sign and grabbed it.

As a book, it was OK... lots of fun stories, ALOT of lists and name dropping, and a fair amount of philosphizing and promoting causes (all good ones, in this case). What struck me reading the book is that it was clear the reason Hagman was so good as JR is because he WAS JR. I've always found actors to be at their best when they're playing a character that is either their own self taken to the extreme, or what they wish they were.. in this case JR was both for Mr. Hagman.

Definitely worth a read if you're a Dallas fan.

Jim Gleason says

Transplant recipients and their families who have ever gone to the US Transplant Games (or are old enough to remember the TV shows "I Dream of Genie" and "Dallas") know the subject of this autobiography, Larry Hagman. Ever the showman, Larry is today most famous for his bi-annual Games baring of his chest to show off the success of his liver transplant and in that story lies the value of this book in the transplant books database collection.

A fun loving read mostly about his long career and amazing life, the transplant part of the story is covered in just a very small but important part of the book. Larry Hagman's life post-transplant is testimony to the success of today's medical advances over the past 50 years of transplantation and in his story, that of liver transplant in particular.

It has been my personal pleasure to have met Larry many times at those US Transplant Games where he is most generous as a spokesman for those Games and the NKF. He is ever present there in presenting medals, providing entertainment on center stage and being generally available to everyone and anybody at the Games with a smile and autograph on his signature fake paper money.

see this and more than a hundred other organ donation/transplant related books - many with my personal reviews - at <http://www.trioweb.org/resources/book...>

Laura Beth says

I've been a fan of Dallas since I was a kid, watching reruns on TNN. Also, thanks to the magic of Nick@Nite, I saw I Dream of Jeannie. I have vague memories of my family grouped around the TV set in the den watching the original as my grandfather always had to see what JR was up to that week. It was such a treat to see Hagman acting right up to his passing on the TNT reboot of Dallas. So after he passed, I went looking for biographies and autobiographies on Larry Hagman. This was the first one I found at the library.

I enjoyed reading it. It's written in a simple style and the title doesn't lie. It's a series of tales (tall or not) that take you through his life. It's slightly political but more due to his involvement in numerous charities and organizations. Lots of classic celebrity stories and most people will (hopefully) recognize many of the names of people that appear in the stories. It ends shortly after his controversial liver operation (around the time the book was written). Personally, I was hoping for more Dallas stories or more in depth emotional stories. There are lots of stories about his parents and wife but almost nothing about his children or grandchildren and his interactions with them. In all fairness, there were quite a few Dallas stories. I need to find an behind the scenes/insider book on Dallas. I came away from this book feeling as though I learned some fun stories but didn't get a lot of depth. He seems to have lived a pretty happy go lucky life and was satisfied with his life, his experience, and his resume. He gave back a lot and tried to make the world a better place with his activism. So all in all, a good life. He ends with the advice that the only answer is love and to "Don't Worry. Be Happy. Feel Good." Not bad advice.

If you enjoyed the writing style of this book I'd also recommend Sammy Hagar's Red Rocker (2nd lead singer of Van Halen; singer, businessman) autobiography. The writing style is similar and both have a positive outlook on life.

Darcy says

When I saw that Larry Hagman died a few months ago I was sad. I remember watching Dallas as a teen and re-runs of I Dream of Jeannie as a kid. I thought I would pick up this book and see what he had to say about his life. I have come to the conclusion that Larry was a nut, but a good one, one that you wished was your friend. It was fun to read about an insider's view of show business, especially Dallas.

Margaret says

Reads like a self-help book for the deeply eccentric. Hagman is just as magnetic as JR, but I feel less dirty about liking him now that I have the full dirt on his enthusiasm for champagne, hot tubs, and silence.
