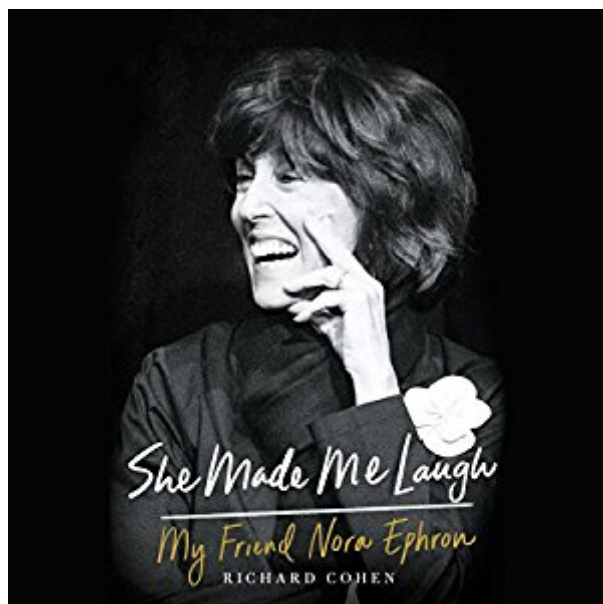


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# She Made Me Laugh: My Friend Nora Ephron



## Synopsis

Nora Ephron, one of the most famous writers, film makers, and personalities of her time is captured by her long-time and dear friend in a hilarious, blunt, raucous, and poignant recollection of their decades-long friendship. Nora Ephron (1941 - 2012) was a phenomenal personality, journalist, essayist, novelist, playwright, Oscar-nominated screenwriter, and movie director (*Sleepless in Seattle*; *You've Got Mail*; *When Harry Met Sally*; *Heartburn*; *Julie & Julia*). She wrote a slew of bestsellers (*I Feel Bad About My Neck: And Other Thoughts on Being a Woman*; *I Remember Nothing: And Other Reflections*; *Scribble, Scribble: Notes on the Media*; *Crazy Salad: Some Things About Women*). She was celebrated by Hollywood, embraced by literary New York, and adored by legions of fans throughout the world. Award-winning journalist Richard Cohen wrote this about his "third-person memoir": "I call this book a third-person memoir. It is about my closest friend, Nora Ephron, and the lives we lived together and how her life got to be bigger until, finally, she wrote her last work, the play, *Lucky Guy*, about a newspaper columnist dying of cancer while she herself was dying of cancer. I have interviewed many of her other friends - Mike Nichols, Tom Hanks, Steven Spielberg, Meryl Streep, Arianna Huffington - but the book is not a name-dropping star turn, but an attempt to capture a remarkable woman who meant so much to so many other women."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I'm a sucker for gossip and for Nora Ephron and so, given the hype about this boo--that the author was one of her best friends, that he would give some sort of inside scoop, made me buy it

immediately. Big mistake. This is one silly, useless book. Many of the details about Nora Ephron--and about other luminaries she consorted with like Tom Hanks--I've read elsewhere, in far more readable prose accompanied by much more interesting insights. I started reading it thinking, Wow, this man is just riding on her coat tails, hoping to make a buck--and then I'd tell myself, there's better stuff to come. NOT. It's mean spirited in places, boring in others, and where it's not those things, there is just filler, gossip you could have picked up from any magazine. Nothing about what she was really like (except a few sentences about how formidable she was). What? I kept thinking. What? You're friendly with famous woman with so many years and you can't give us ANYTHING meaningful. Please, don't waste your money. I'll sell you mine for five bucks.

The problem with this book is that Cohen adored Ephron, whom we all know was a witty writer. But unwittingly he paints a portrait of someone interested largely in celebrities, stars, the rich and famous. We get more quotes from Tom Hanks than Ephron's husband and two sons, who seem marginal to the book. There is something innately snobbish and unpleasant and false about this. I doubt that Ephron was a glib person. But that's how she's depicted here. How did she deal with failure? How did she deal with life when it wasn't a fancy dinner party? Did she ever have self-doubt. She had more flops than hits in Hollywood. Cohen brushes it aside. I doubt that Ephron did. What about her sons? Her husband? Her sisters? They're barely quoted. All of them are kind of brushed aside in this two-dimensional book.. The most interesting parts of the book is her vulnerability after leaving Carl Bernstein. What was she like then? She moved in with friends in New York,, whom I think are not even interviewed, or barely so.. I have a feeling she was more vulnerable and complicated and, yes, insecure than Cohen depicts in his two-dimensional portrait.

Early on in Washington Post columnist Richard Cohen's intimate, affectionate and engaging memoir of Nora Ephron, he reveals the problem of writing about her life and their 39-year friendship: "Nora wrote about everything. She not only chronicled her life, she consumed all the best material, leaving nothing but cinders for a biographer to sift through." Fans of the filmmaker (*Sleepless in Seattle*, *When Harry Met Sally*) and author (*I Feel Bad About My Neck*) need not worry; Cohen's *SHE MADE ME LAUGH* expands and enriches Ephron's familiar anecdotes by retelling them with a keen, questioning eye and adds new personal tales and insights. The eldest daughter of two alcoholic Hollywood screenwriters, Ephron moved to New York City in the early 1960s to become a writer. Soon, she was writing for *Esquire*, *Ms.* and the *New York Times*. She turned her very public marital breakup (with second husband Carl Bernstein) into the comic revenge novel *Heartburn*. Calling

Ephron "a deft literary pickpocket," Cohen recalls how everything in her life was fair game for an article, screenplay or blog post--except her six-year battle with leukemia. Outside of her immediate family, Cohen was one of the few people she trusted with her cancer secret. (Cohen's longtime companion, Mona Ackerman, was also battling cancer at the time and would die two months after Ephron in 2012.) Cohen's heartfelt tribute gives fans new insight into her work process, her successes and failures, her droll wit and enormous generosity and her decision to keep her final illness out of public view. Richard Cohen's loving and intimate memoir, *SHE MADE ME LAUGH*, celebrates his four-decade friendship with writer/filmmaker Nora Ephron while offering keen insights into her personal and professional life.

I was a big fan of Nora Ephron and mourned her passing with the rest of the world. So when I saw this book, I was delighted. Mr. Cohen, she may have made you laugh, but so far I have not read one funny thing. You make her sound as if she was a horrible, rude, narcissistic person, and perhaps that's true, but then why write about it? Let her rest in peace. From the way you describe her and how she treated people, I would most certainly not want her as a friend. My feeling is Mr. Cohen is trying to make a buck off his relationship with Ms. Ephron. He keeps telling the reader what wonderful friends they were, perhaps even best friends. I don't think so. Mr. Cohen, a best friend would not do this to another.

I did finish "She Made Me Laugh: My Friend Nora Ephron" but am not sure what to make of it: if you want a bird's-eye view of Nora Ephron's fabulous Manhattan-Hamptons' lifestyle, including names of upscale kitchenware, designer fabrics, and chichi restaurants, this is the book for you; it's especially helpful if you're renovating a home. If you're keen to hear bits about her famous friends, including Steven Spielberg, Meg Ryan, and Washington hostess Sally Quinn, then immediately click "buy" on its Kindle edition. If you're looking for tips on international travel, complete with exclusive hotels and obscure food finds, pack this along with your Fodor's. If you want to experience schadenfreude and feelings of superiority, devour every page, because Cohen pigeonholes Ephron as a narcissistic social climber whose controlling ways brooked no challenge; yet, he's shrewd enough to scatter about perfunctory compliments, which lend a superficial warmth and balance to his memories. On completing the last page, I wondered what emotions their platonic relationship was based upon: one-sided, or mutual, contempt came to mind. In short, if you want a broad picture and deep insights into Ephron herself -- on the whys and wherefores of her personality and choices -- you might want to skip Cohen's take. I can't help but assume that's what Ephron's husband, two of her sisters, and

sons did, because none is mentioned in Cohen's acknowledgments. That all said, I finished the book, and pretty quickly too, which is why I started this review with "[I'm] not sure what to make of it."

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