



## Lies My Mother Never Told Me: A Memoir

*Kaylie Jones*

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## **Lies My Mother Never Told Me: A Memoir** Kaylie Jones

In her riveting memoir *Lies My Mother Never Told Me*, Kaylie Jones—the daughter of author James Jones (*From Here to Eternity*) and an acclaimed author in her own right (*A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries*; *Celeste Ascending*; *As Soon As It Rains*)—tells the poignant story of her relationship with her famous father and her alcoholic mother, and of her own struggles with the disease. A true story of privilege, loss, self-discovery, and redemption, *Lies My Mother Never Told Me* is Jones's unforgettable account of a not-quite-fairy-tale childhood and adulthood defined by two constants: literature and alcohol.

## **Lies My Mother Never Told Me: A Memoir Details**

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## From Reader Review Lies My Mother Never Told Me: A Memoir for online ebook

### Heather says

I didn't actually quite finish this book, but I was pretty sick of the characters. Okay, so they all like to drink. Yada, yada, yada... she doesn't drink anymore, but mommy still does.

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### Luciana Herman says

This was one of those books that I couldn't put down and not just because it's a memoir. The book does start out slowly as Jones excavates her past and remembers her father, James Jones. Once she starts getting into her battle with alcoholism and her relationship with her mother, the memoir begins to shine. My favorite chapter was the one about hope, because it's hard to believe that Jones could ever pull herself together enough to not only survive, but to come out her ordeals an enlightened, powerful woman.

Jones manages to make you laugh and cry, reflecting the way life sometimes is. I loved that she embraced her struggles and learned from them, and I also love that she became exactly who she wanted to be after everything was said and done. What I took away from this book is that anything is possible if you believe you have the strength to overcome, and Jones certainly did.

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### Angel says

Yawn. Another dull memoir with an interesting title.

Author is an author. Author had famous author parent and alcoholic parent. Author hates her mommy. Author stops drinking and becomes a blackbelt. Reader doesn't care.

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### Will Byrnes says

Kaylie Jones has written a crying-from-laughter, weeping-from-sadness, can't-put-it-down, through-a-shot-glass-darkly memoir about growing up the child of literary giant James Jones. Her father's WW II classics brought in enough income to allow the family a life of physical comfort. But alcoholism is quite resistant to a greenback cure, and both of Kaylie's parents were afflicted, a legacy she inherited. While dad's contribution to the world can be found in libraries across the planet, mother Gloria's contribution was a lifetime of cruelty, control, selfishness and destructiveness along with an enormous capacity for laughter and fun. How could any child of two such parents possibly live up to the accomplishment of one parent, or survive the firestorm of the other? Apparently Kaylie Jones has come through, battle-scarred but still standing.

### Kaylie Jones

The social milieu in which the Jones family existed was shared by what seems like most of the major

American writers of the 20th century. She drops more names than a phone book deliveryman, but there is no snooty obnoxiousness associated with this. She is not trying to build herself up by referencing the wealthy, the well-known, and the accomplished among her family's associates. The presence of these people was merely what was normal in that world. You could do worse in creating a survey course on 20th century American literature than to list the writers the Jones family knew personally. The details offered here also add insight into some of their well-known works. It might be a bit tough for a kid growing up among so many bright lights not to feel a bit overshadowed. And it is to her credit that she so clearly notes that she benefited professionally in no small quantity because of who she was rather than purely on what she had done.

Raised in Paris, fluent in French and Russian, an award-winning author of screenplays short stories, and five novels, Jones managed to overcome her barriers, accept some of her advantages and, while she has not attained the acclaim of her famed parent, she has managed to succeed in her chosen profession. How many writers, whatever their parentage, can say that? *Lies My Mother Never Told Me* reads and entertains like a novel. It is one of the most interesting, most engaging memoirs I have read.

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=====EXTRA STUFF

Links to the author's personal, Twitter and FB pages

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## Diane says

"Only one word was whispered in our house, as if it were the worst insult in the entire world you could call somebody -- *alcoholic*."

This is an incredible memoir of both addiction and the literati. Kaylie Jones was the child of two heavy drinkers: her father was the writer James Jones, author of "From Here to Eternity" and "The Thin Red Line," and her mother, Gloria, was a renowned socialite. Kaylie's childhood was spent in Paris, and her parents' weekly parties were attended by scores of writers and other celebrities. Later, the family had to relocate to the States in an effort to save money.

The book is an intoxicating mix of dysfunctional family memoir, alcoholism and writer stories. The dysfunction comes mostly from Kaylie's mother, who showed a lot of hostility and jealousy toward her daughter, and they had a stormy relationship until the day Gloria died. Gloria said horrible, awful things to Kaylie, such as telling her she was ugly, a klutz, fat, useless, and that Gloria wished Kaylie hadn't been born. I haven't been this angry at a parent since reading Jeannette Walls' "The Glass Castle."

Fortunately for Kaylie, her father was a bighearted guy and often made time for her, despite his work and his drinking problem. Kaylie always felt safest when her dad was around. He taught her how to protect herself, how to fight, how to shoot a gun, and he would read great books to them in the evenings. She had fond memories of him reading *The Odyssey* aloud during a family vacation in Greece. Sadly, James Jones died when Kaylie was a teenager, a loss that loomed over her for years. Eventually she was able to channel that grief into her writing. "It occurred to me that if my father had lived, I would never have written. His death had broken me, and it was only through reading and writing that I had begun to heal myself."

As for writer stories, almost every American author you can think of for the past 60 years is mentioned in the book, and Kaylie probably knew them. There's the story about meeting Truman Capote, of being carried around on James Baldwin's shoulders, of having lunch at John Irving's house, of vacations with William

Styron, of Kurt Vonnegut stopping by her parents' home in Paris, of a squabble with Norman Mailer, etc. etc. During a premiere for the movie based on Kaylie's novel, "A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries," all of the great American literary lions who had been her father's friends were invited to attend a garden party at Gloria's house. Kris Kristofferson, who acted in the movie, said, "My God, if they dropped a bomb on this tent they'd wipe out half the canon of American letters in one swoop!"

One of the things I liked about the structure of the book was how Kaylie broke up the chapters with popular stories that her mother used to tell. One of my favorites involved Lauren "Betty" Bacall, with whom Gloria was good friends:

"For several days after my father died, my mother, lying with a bottle of scotch on the couch in the living room, refused to budge. Someone called Betty Bacall, who arrived like the cavalry. Taking the situation in hand, she said to Gloria, 'All right, you don't have to get up now, but you will soon. I went through it with Bogie and I know exactly how you feel. Here's what you do: nothing. No impulsive decisions, no rash moves. Don't start giving stuff away that you'll regret later. Don't sell the house. Don't do anything stupid and for God's sake, don't fuck Frank Sinatra.' Betty was of course referring to her own disastrous rebound relationship with Sinatra in the wake of Humphrey Bogart's death. Gloria started to laugh. She laughed so hard she had to sit up to avoid choking, and from there, she finally got up and had something to eat."

The second half of the book deals with Kaylie's road to sobriety and her ongoing struggles with her mother, whose drinking got worse and worse in her later years. Kaylie's writing is lovely and there were several passages that moved me to tears. This book is one of the best addiction memoirs I've read -- right up there with Pete Hamill's "A Drinking Life" and "Drinking: A Love Story" by Caroline Knapp. I highly recommend it.

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### **Joanne Clarke Gunter says**

Why do I keep on reading these memoirs written by the not so famous offspring of famous writers when most are basically the same story? Story line: famous father writer (in this case James Jones) drinks excessively as does the wife/mother causing many family "incidents" making for good famous father writer memoir material; famous father writer spends hours and hours struggling to come up with the next great novel but often fails; famous father writer has many famous writer friends and spends a lot of time drinking and/or eating with them (more good famous father writer memoir material); one or more offspring of famous father writer (in this case Kaylie Jones) decides to become a writer in order to carry on the famous father writer's legacy and make him proud and to get to know and understand the famous father writer better; famous father writer's offspring struggles to cope with famous father writer's death (and with her mother both before and after his death). There you have it in a nutshell. This is Kaylie Jones's story of growing up with her father and mother, but it is so similar to, say, Susan Cheever's memoir of her father John Cheever, or Alexandra Styron's memoir of her father William Styron or memoirs written about Truman Capote or Norman Mailer, that I am finding it difficult to separate the books from each other. I do enjoy getting to know more about some of my favorite authors, but it is uncanny how similar many of these writer's lives were. Or maybe not since they were all friends and spent a lot of time together. This book is well written, but does not stand out among the famous father writer memoirs.

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### **Lydia Presley says**

Memoirs seem to be hit and miss for me this year. When offered the opportunity to read Lies My Mother

Never Told Me I jumped on it because, honestly, the title is great and it looked interesting. My mistake was not looking to see who it was about.

Normally this wouldn't be a big deal. Most memoirs I read are about people I've never been "introduced" to. That's the whole point of a memoir, right? Getting to know someone. It was different in this book though. Because Kaylie Jones is the daughter of a famous writer (James Jones), there was a lot.. and I do mean a lot... of name-dropping in this book. Mostly names I'd never heard of due to the writers/actors/directors being people outside of the circle I am usually interested in.

This would not have been a big deal to me, I'm always happy to expand that circle, if I hadn't felt so put off by everything she was writing. I felt as if she was writing to impress and as if she was just a bit whiny, to be honest. While I could feel sympathy for her and how she was raised, still.. she was the recipient of so many things that most of us never get to see or do. This especially struck home when, while discussing her mothers estate, she and her husband were "okay" so long as her daughter received a private education and ivy league college.

Each section of the book begins with a short story told by her mother. I think these stories are where the title comes in (although I can't be absolutely sure of that). Most of the stories went right over my head or were un-interesting. The only one that got a chuckle from me was the Frank Sinatra one.

I'll shelve this memoir as another in a growing group of memoirs that seems to be written for a certain niche of people. To anyone unfamiliar with James Jones' work, as I am, it just doesn't carry anything of interest.

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## Jennifer says

### Book Overview

To say Kaylie Jones grew up in an interesting household is an understatement. Her father was James Jones—the acclaimed novelist renowned for his WWII books, including *From Here To Eternity* and *The Thin Red Line* (both made into movies). Her mother Gloria was a beauty (she was Marilyn Monroe's stand-in for a movie once) and a quick-witted storyteller who was both brainy and bawdy. (Some of her mother's best stories are interspersed throughout the book and make for some very interesting and fun reading.)

During Kaylie's childhood in Paris, she and her adopted brother Jamie live a lifestyle far from their parent's humble Midwestern roots—parties that last all night, guests who include a veritable "who's who" of the literary world (family friends included William Styron, Irwin Shaw and Willie Morris), a full-time nanny, private schools, exotic vacations. Yet Kaylie's childhood was not terribly happy. Her mother's mean streak and unreliability helped make Kaylie an uncertain and tentative child. Kaylie's father was the light of her life, but he was often "missing in action" due to his writing or being a part of the constant party that was at the center of her parents' lives. The end result was a lonely childhood filled with doubt, self-esteem issues and uncertainty. And no one in the family dared to say the forbidden word: alcoholic.

When the family moved back to the United States, they settled in a literary enclave in the Hamptons. Not too long after, James Jones's health began to deteriorate (in no small part to the heavy drinking that accompanied his lifestyle), and he died when Kaylie was 16. His passing ripped a hole into Kaylie's life that was never fully mended. Although she was now struggling with her own drinking problem (yet deep in denial), Kaylie promised her father on his deathbed that she would keep her mother from drinking so much.

This promise becomes an almost unbearable burden. To keep an alcoholic from drinking is an impossible

task—especially when your own drinking problems are unrecognized. The toxic relationship between Gloria and Kaylie plays out over the years as they dance to the same tune over and over again ... until Kaylie acknowledges her own drinking problems and begins to realize the true depth of her mother's alcoholism and how their relationship is built on a script that casts Gloria as the all-powerful tyrant and Kaylie as the submissive, disobedient slave.

When Kaylie begins her own path to recovery, her mother does everything in her power to thwart her. Kaylie slowly begins to understand that she does not need to take responsibility for her mother's drinking and that she does not need to accept her mother's opinions about her love affairs, lifestyle or career. And when Kaylie becomes a mother, she struggles valiantly to rebuild a relationship with her mother and provide her daughter with a grandmother—a Herculean task that is littered with conflict, anger, betrayal and sadness.

In the end, the relationship between mother and daughter deteriorates to a point where it ceases to exist in any real form. When her mother finally dies, the only thing Kaylie feels is relief.

### My Thoughts

Kaylie Jones has written a clear-eyed, unflinching memoir that is absolutely stunning. She has a very direct and spare writing style that suits the material well. She presents her story with a minimum of embellishment and little drama—yet you are drawn in by the strength of her writing and her story itself. Besides the obvious draw of having a famous novelist for a father and a childhood that includes frequent brushes with literary giants, Kaylie's story is most compelling for the life-long struggle she has with coming to terms with her mother's and her own alcoholism. So many memoirs feature flawed and alcoholic mothers, but I've never read one as direct and unswerving in its focus on the ugliness that drinking can bring as this one.

Yet don't think this book is all doom and gloom. Humor permeates the book (particularly in her mother's stories that are interspersed throughout), and Kaylie does find moments of grace and humor even in her darkest hours. In other words, you're not going to be depressed after reading the book. In fact, I suspect most readers will come away from this memoir feeling inspired and uplifted. If Kaylie can find a path to peace, so can we.

Another compelling aspect of Kaylie Jones's memoir is her struggle to find her voice as a writer while standing in her father's shadow. Throughout her career, Kaylie never feels she is good enough—that she is only granted scholarships, accepted into writing programs, and published because of who her father is. This inability to believe in herself and continual self-doubt make her easy to empathize with. I imagine that anyone who follows in the footsteps of a successful parent must almost always grapple with these types of doubts and fears.

As Kaylie begins to regain her life—both by admitting she has a drinking problem and by becoming a mother—I felt her strength and confidence grow slowly but surely. One of the keys to her salvation was pursuing a black belt in tae kwon do. I was particularly drawn to this aspect of the book because I'm currently taking my son to karate classes, and I've thought of trying it myself. Hearing about Kaylie's experiences as she progresses through the various belt levels was quite inspirational to me—and it made me realize how pursuing a goal like a black belt can be a literal life-saving quest.

### My Final Recommendation

There are so many reasons to read this memoir.

First, anyone interested in American writers of the mid-20th century would be fascinated by this insider's glimpse into an exclusive literary world. This memoir features stories about Norman Mailer, Kurt Vonnegut, Truman Capote, William Styron and many more. Interspersed with the appearances by these literary giants

are brushes with Hollywood luminaries such as Kris Kristofferson and Frank Sinatra. In addition, this book serves as a mini-biography of James Jones—exploring his childhood, marriage and literary legacy.

Second, I think this memoir should have a place on the bookshelf of any adult child of an alcoholic (ACOA). Kaylie's struggle with her mother's alcoholism is raw, unflinching and brutal. As Kaylie herself says, so many aspects of her relationship with her mother is textbook ACOA material. If drinking plays a role in your family life, I imagine that reading this memoir would be both painful but ultimately helpful and perhaps even healing.

Third, this memoir is well-written and weaves a compelling story. What more do you really need?

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### **Karol says**

Kaylie Jones's chapter, *City of Lights*, an excerpt of her memoir published in *Epiphany*, was named a notable essay in the *Best American Essays 2010*. It is a powerful, moving, and dryly funny story about coming of age in Paris with a knockout mother and a famous father, James Jones, author of the *Thin Red Line* and National Book Award-winner *From Here to Eternity*. It is a touching memoir that *Vogue* named as one of the seasons best in the fall of 2009. One of the most poignant scenes is when the author rides her bike toward the sunset in Key West, at a crossroads after meeting the love of her life. She decides to take a new path and we route for her all the way. A heartfelt, funny, and inspiring memoir.

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### **Nette says**

A good read in a weird, twisted way. I ended up rooting for the author's alcoholic "monster" of a mother, who was way more intriguing and funny than her self-righteous pill of a daughter. The daughter who, by the way, accepted lots of money from her awful mom, had no compunction about living (as an adult) in mom's houses and apartments, and who left her own tiny daughter with her mom whenever she needed a babysitter (and who snatched her away only when her daughter started getting "fat" when grandma lets her eat an occasional burger). I hope Gloria Jones comes back from the grave and puts a curse on this ungrateful twit.

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### **Russ says**

This book is divided into thirds. The first third I'd definitely give 4 stars. Kaylie Jones starts each chapter with a story that her mother used to tell, and then writes beautifully of her father, the author James Jones (*From Here to Eternity*), and her mother and the memories of her life. She's a gifted writer and I loved gaining insight into their lives in Paris and the US.

The next 2/3 of the book I'd recommend to someone dealing with an alcoholic parent perhaps. It was a sad story of her relationship with her mother after her father had passed and it seemed to me as though she were writing to process her experience. There were glimpses of grace in her life to be certain, but overall I felt as though the writing derailed into a book for adult children of alcoholics. In my opinion, this should have been two different books.

It's worth picking up to read the first third, but I couldn't recommend that second two thirds at all.

## Sara Strand says

The problem is that obviously you can't help someone who doesn't recognize they have a problem and others around them think there isn't a problem. It was until Kaylie realized her own drinking is out of hand and she admits she is an alcoholic that she recognizes her mother's problem. Kaylie really struggles with the criticism she gets from her mom and she is really stifled in her own life because she dreads what she's going to get from her mom because of it.

My favorite passage of the whole book was: "We cathect an object narcissistically..when we experience it not as the center of its own activity but as a part of ourselves. If the object does not behave as we expect or wish, we may at times be immeasurably disappointed or offended." In my mind, I could hear my mother saying "How can you listen to such shit? You have no taste in music." My mother could never say "I don't like strawberries". For her, it was always, "How could you eat strawberries? They are the most disgusting fruit in the world." A parent suffering from narcissistic disturbances sees her child only as a mirror image of herself.... What these mothers had once failed to find in their own mothers they were able to find in their children: someone at their disposal who can be used as an echo, who can be controlled, is completely centered on them, will never desert them, and offers full attention and admiration. But, of course, a child cannot help but be a child. A child grows fussy, sometimes rejecting, sometimes demanding, easily exhausted, and exhausting. My mother had no patience for any of this. She adored me - as she was quick to announce - but she could only tolerate my presence in very small doses."

I had to stop reading for two days just to take it in and digest that. It rocked my world. I couldn't believe that this is normal, really, and that there is a name for it. To turn the personal table around- my mom was one of six kids, she was the only daughter. Her mother made it very clear that she did not like my mom. At all. It's really a bizarre feeling and I can't imagine what my mom felt like. The boys were adored but my mom was treated like a slave. She is very close to her father, probably because her mother abandoned the family when the youngest boys, twins, were only two. My mom had to step into role as care taker for everyone. Growing up my mom assumed this was normal until she had my brother and I and realized it had nothing to do with my mom. It was her mother who had the problem.

My mom and I have had a pretty good relationship for the most part. There have been times where I felt I was treated unfairly simply because I was the oldest and I was a girl. She wanted me to do big things with my life because I was a girl and she knew I'd face adversity simply because of what I was. And I'm glad she pushed me. But growing up, I can say I felt like anything I did wasn't really important. My parents were never the help-at-school type, take our friends to fun things, etc. It was a miracle I was ever able to have sleepovers. At the time I was angry but now I get it. It's just not who they are. I have made some decisions as an adult that my mom disagreed with me on and made it very clear I was making a huge mistake. There have been times where I felt like maybe there was something wrong with me. But as god as my witness- my mom is awesome. I love her to the moon and back and I have no right to complain because I know she did the best she could for us. And still does.

And let's turn it around as me as a parent. I struggle. I'm not even going to lie. I love both of my kids equally but I feel more of a connection to Jackson. Is it because I suffered post partum depression after Olivia for her entire first year? I didn't really bond with her for the first year of her life- I was mostly crying and praying I could make it all stop. Is it because I was going through a rough time in my marriage while pregnant to Jackson? I clung to that baby like he was my lifeline. I don't know. But I know that each and every day I struggle. The non stop crying, the arguing, the fighting over the blue marker when we have 6 others on the table, the fact I never get to sit down and be old Sara? All of it plus more makes me think MAYBE I wasn't

meant to be a mom. THIS is the stuff they should tell you. You should have to go through a rigorous testing to be able to have a baby. It's serious and the demands put on you are like no other. Make no mistake- one baby is easy. EASY. Put more than one kid in the mix and suddenly everything is a battle. It's hard and god help me, I don't know if I would do it again. And that? Terrifies me. And keeps me up some nights. I don't know what that makes me but I know I try to be the absolute best mom I can be. Because they deserve it.

I could go for HOURS on this but I won't. I want you to get this book. If you've ever had a relationship with a parent that has been strained- please, please, please read this book. It will help you more than you know.

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### **Timothy Bazzett says**

My first exposure to Kaylie Jones came years ago with her very autobiographical novel, A SOLDIER'S DAUGHTER NEVER CRIES, which I liked very much. And which was made into quite a successful Hollywood film. As the daughter of writer James Jones (whose first novel, FROM HERE TO ETERNITY, firmly established him in the early 1950s as an important writer of his generation), Kaylie Jones enjoyed a rather privileged childhood in the rarefied international literary community of Paris in the 1960s. Her memoir, LIES MY MOTHER NEVER TOLD ME, finally reveals how seriously this childhood and youth were marred by parents who were alcoholics and somewhat negligent in their parental duties. Jones's mother Gloria was perhaps most guilty in that she seemed simply incapable of expressing her love for her daughter. The author recognizes, years later, that this failing in Gloria was probably the result of neglect and abuse at the hands of her own mother, who she said she "hated." The other tragedy of Kaylie's life was the death of her famous father when she was only sixteen.

The memoir is something of a tell-all, filled with names of the rich and famous from the celebrity world of the time. For example, she tells of her father's friend William Styron propositioning her, noting that "... if my father had known that Bill was going to proposition his nineteen-year-old, grief-stricken daughter, he would have beaten the living s\*\*t out of him, sick or not." This anecdote seems to confirm the story that Anne Roiphe told of her own affair with the long-married and famously philandering Styron in her memoir, ART & MADNESS.

In yet another story, Kaylie tells of meeting her father's high school sweetheart, Annis Flemming, during a visit to Robinson, Illinois, who described the young James Jones as "a gentle, fragile boy ... He was a bit of a show-off, but that's not really who he was inside. He was hurting so bad when he came back after the war ... All the boys were like that when they came back." This assessment seems to parallel certain contradictory descriptions of a young Hemingway after the the Great War. Gertrude Stein often commented that Hemingway's macho displays of bravado were an act to mask his sensitive side. (Read Lyle Larsen's STEIN & HEMINGWAY.)

I had mixed feelings about this memoir. When she talks of her father and their special relationship, the book is at its best. In the second half (or more) of the book, when she begins to speak of her problems with her unloving - and unlovable -alcoholic mother, and then her own alcoholism and subsequent reform, the narrative sometimes slips into self-pity and becomes tediously repetitious. There is much of the proud mother in the author when she speaks of her daughter Eyrna, as well as pride of accomplishment in her struggles to earn her black belt. But the name-dropping later seems to become more obvious and unnecessary, slowing the pace of the book. For example, I wondered if it was really necessary, for example, in describing her father's friendship with Willie Morris, to mention that Donna Tartt and John Grisham had been students of Morris at Mississippi. And there are other similar name-dropping digressions scattered throughout the book - Winston Groom, Truman Capote, Norman Mailer, Vonnegut, Joseph Heller, Frank Sinatra, Lauren Bacall, etc. Being an avid reader and filmgoer, some I found interesting, but not all.

There were also, however, very poignant moments which made me nearly weep, such as her sadness at watching her mother's gradual deterioration which included memory loss. I remembered my own mother describing how her mother (my grandmother) always loved to talk of the past, until one day, in her early 90s, she began to forget. My mother is 95 now, and I see it happening to her.

But as a booklover and memoirist, the passage that struck home the hardest with me was a comment Jones made as she looked over the personal bookshelves of Willie Morris the day of his funeral -

"My eyes drifted over the contents of Willie's study - books I did not know and photos of strangers. Never mind, I thought, Willie wrote it all down in his memoirs, and ... the books will endure. And we will always have Bill Styron's books, and Truman Capote's, and Faulkner's, and Tolstoy's books, and my father's books, and those, no matter what else, will always be worth fighting for."

Books. They are indeed so important. I hope she is right. "The books will endure."

- Tim Bazzett, author of the memoir, BOOKLOVER

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## **Mardel Fehrenbach says**

Kaylie Jones memoir, Lies my Mother Never told Me left me stunned.

In fact, it took me a little while to warm up to the book and at one point I was wondering why I was reading as the early sections seemed to be in danger of becoming just another "child of celebrity" writing about the dark underbelly of life with famous drunks. It was not that it was badly written; Jones' direct style and sometimes shockingly spare prose serves the material well. The book is often moving and is filled with moments of humor even in the midst of madness and despair.

But as the author slowly began to find her own self, her own voice, her own place in the world I became more and more wrapped up in the book. As Kaylie begins to learn and accept that she is first the child of an alcoholic, and as she moves from this discovery onto the discovery that she herself is an alcoholic, she also learns that so much of what she has always known in life is shaped by this terrible childhood, or even in some ways this lack of having a complete childhood. Ms. Jones is very good and delving into this aspect of her own awakening, explaining it and conveying it with a very real sense. Her relationship to her alcoholic mother may be textbook, but even textbook cases are painful and often not recognized by those who are living them. Kaylie Jones brings great humanity to her journey. The journey is brutal and the story seems to be told with unflinching honesty.

I think that although there is much here for any one who has grown up with an alcoholic parent, whatever the situation, this well-written, compellingly honest memoir also has much to offer any reader who is interested in trying to understand the difficulties faced by children of alcoholics, or in fact anyone whose childhood had profound impact on their ability to become their own "selves" in adulthood.

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## **Jean says**

The best memoir I've read since THE GLASS CASTLE.

