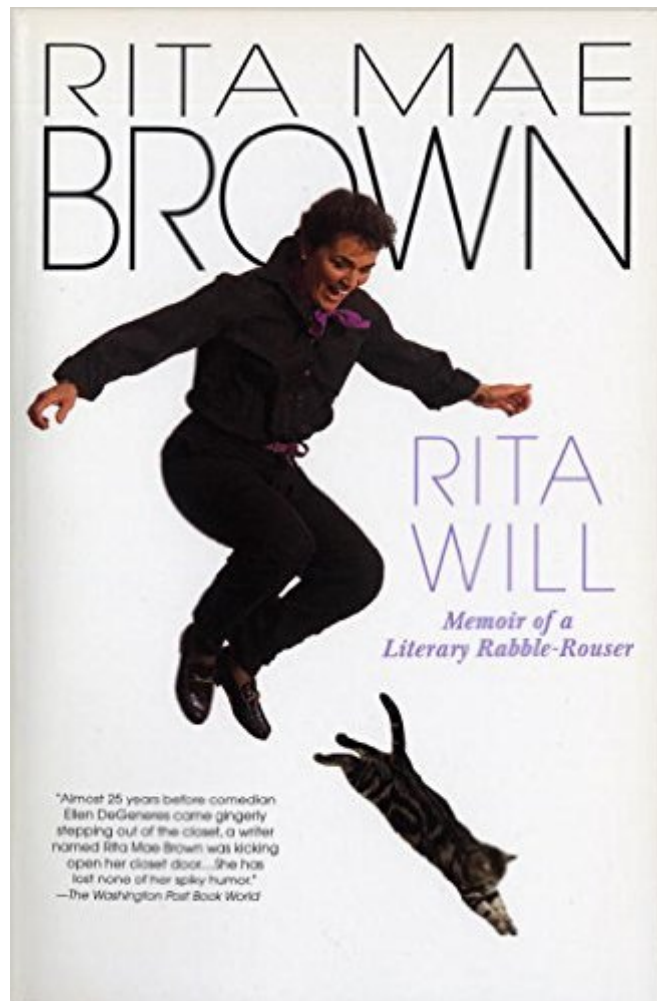


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# Rita Will: Memoir Of A Literary Rabble-Rouser



## Synopsis

When Rita Mae Brown writes, people often end up laughing out loud. So naturally, when the bestselling author of *Rubyfruit Jungle*, *Venus Envy*, and the *Mrs. Murphy* mystery series writes about her own life, it's a hoot, a rollicking ride with an independent, opinionated woman who changed literary history--the first openly lesbian writer to break into the mainstream. Now, in *Rita Will*, she tells all...and tells it hilariously. It is often said that the best comedy springs from hard times. And Rita Mae Brown has seen plenty of those. In this irresistibly readable memoir, she recounts the drama of her birth as the illegitimate daughter of a flighty blue blood who left her in an orphanage. The sickly baby was quickly rescued by relatives eager to adopt her but afraid she would not survive the long journey home. Her determination to live, and shock everyone by doing it, has become a metaphor for her entire life. Though raised by these loving adoptive parents and a wacky host of other interfering kin, Rita Mae Brown learned early on to be tough and to speak her mind. It was her refusal to be anything but herself that often brought her the most trouble. Here she tells of her tempestuous relationship with her adoptive mother, the mythic Juts of the novels *Six of One* and *Bingo*, who called her "the ill," for illegitimate, whenever she lost her temper, and who swore she'd introduce Rita Mae to the social graces, including the dreaded cotillion, even if it killed them both. Here, too, Rita Mae reveals how her headstrong support of social causes almost cost her a hard-earned education and her outspokenness in the early days of the women's movement got her drummed out of NOW, and how the release of her first novel, the scandalous classic *Rubyfruit Jungle*, made her an overnight phenomenon--the most famous openly gay person in America--and took her from the heights of the *New York Times* bestseller list to the surreal playhouse that is Hollywood. Through it all, Rita Mae has drawn strength from her profound bond with animals, from her abiding affection for the South and its native tongue, and from the great passions of her life. She writes with close-to-the-bone honesty about woman-woman love...including her love-at-first-sight relationship with a popular actor and her headline-making romance with tennis great Martina Navratilova. With her trademark humor, she unflinchingly bares her own flaws, flouting public opinion yet displaying the unflappable good sense that shows through everything she writes. A look into a woman's mind and a writer's irrepressible spirit, *Rita Will* is quintessential Rita Mae Brown--a book that feels like a kick-your-shoes-off visit with an old friend. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is hilarious--several times I found myself laughing out loud at something she said. I minused out one star because of her blatant southern-centricism--she thinks most of us Yankees are rude, and that only southerners possess real manners. My little tabby cat Sammy says PFFFFFTTTT to that. Her account of the Martina/Judy galimony brouhaha is especially hilarious, with poor Rita Mae stuck in the middle, trying to encourage the two to settle things amicably. She gives a highly unflattering (but probably true) portrait of Judy Nelson. Her first impression of Judy was: "How often do you meet a woman whose hair can be ruined by a ceiling fan?" That one cracks me up every time. She talks about some of her relationships with women, most notable those with Martina Navratilova, Fannie Flagg, and Judy Nelson. She relates the struggles she went through getting a college education and establishing her writing career, but she manages to keep things light by peppering amusing anecdotes of family life (and reactions) in between the more serious passages. She talks about her days as an lesbian feminist activist with Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem, which I found to be of great interest, as she worked closely with these famous women. She is not kind to Billie Jean King, declaring, "Some people get the face they deserve as they grow old; Billie Jean also got the thighs she deserved." MEOOWWW. Sneaky Pie must have contributed that one. This is a thoroughly enjoyable read, full of Southern wit and charm. If you're a fan of Rita Mae's work, you'll love reading her real-life story.

One of the greatest gifts a popular author can give their fans next to a "How To" on writing and style is an Autobiography. In her Memoir Ms. Brown pulls out all stops and allows the reader a unique

window into her life allowing one to see what motivates her writing. It is no big surprise that some of her best books are snippets of the author's own life. Having read these works long before this creation my attention was pleasantly held in reserve as the pages leaped by me in high-volume page turning style. Others may have found this as a "re-read" of her past novels but I disagree and rather call it as a wonderful enhancement to the stories of her life as well as an humorous inspiration to me. No Rita Mae fan should be without this book on their shelf.

...I'm a tennis fan who was curious about the author's insights on Martina Navratilova. What I ended up with was a tremendously interesting and engaging book. Rita Mae Brown has perspectives and experiences unlike my own and I could not put the book down. I liked the parts about her family also. Certainly there are political messages here, but they are based on her own experiences and are not "preachy" or coming from someone who lives in theories only. If you are a fan of her books, this will be a big treat for you. If you don't know her, read this book for a different life perspective, particularly about women's issues, including lesbian issues. If these issues offend you, or you don't like reading about them, then this book is probably not for you. It's not an integral part of the book, but it is there. The book is about a person. The book reads like you are talking to her, and she is very interesting. Also, I always suspected Billie Jean King was wretched personally, so I really liked the parts where my opinion is all but supported by someone in the know! This is an autobiography. Of course the book is about her. Dah! There are a few instances where she comes off a little haughty in my opinion, but I haven't published books or earned the money to have a farm in Virginia, and I didn't struggle through poverty for years to get there either, so I think she's entitled to a little license, folks. The only part I didn't like was when she discussed Fannie Flagg's former lover and only gave her a pseudonym with a vague but "see if you can guess" description. I'm a born gossip and love stuff like that! I think I figured out her hints, but I hate having to do that. It's such a silly exercise. Maybe that was the point in doing that, who knows. Anyone in the closet ought to read this regarding her depiction of Jerry Pfeiffer. I think the silliness of that lifestyle is well exposed simply by recounting the facts. Anyway, very good read!

I already knew that Rita Mae Brown is one of the funniest writers alive today. I split my sides reading "Six of One", which remains my favorite. Now I appreciate just how intelligent, courageous, and resourceful she is. She dives right into life, and has played a part in some of our most tempestuous recent history. I found her analyses of the feminist movement, the gay-rights movement, "hollyweird" to be refreshingly candid and intelligent, as is her Southern working class viewpoint. I had a little

trouble getting through the first part of the book, lists of names of people I don't know who aren't really described; but I found I couldn't put it down even then. I like this woman, and I appreciate her sharing herself and her opinions with me. There aren't too many people whose opinions I care to hear. I'm writing this because I found some of the reviews here shockingly petty and sniping. Here's a bit of heartfelt acclaim to tip the scales the other way.

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