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My Mother's Clothes



Synopsis

This is a book about the depth of a daughter's love, and the breadth of a mother's life; it is about letting go, but never forgetting...A photographer's love letter to her late mother, whose five year struggle with Alzheimer's and devout passion for couture clothing inspired this poignant and moving photo essay which sparkles with the memories of her mother's glamorous and fashionable life.

Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â In My Mother's Clothes, photographer Jeannette Montgomery Barron creates a poignant and enduring portrait of her late mother through still life images of her cherished clothing, shoes, and personal possessions. As her mother's struggle with Alzheimer's progressed, robbing her of any remembered past, Montgomery Barron began this unique visual album as a way of both sparking her mother's memories, and coping with her own sense of loss. Poetic, riveting, elegant, My Mother's Clothes is part fashion diary, part personal memoir, part loving memorial, and part life celebration. Ã Â Ã Â An inspiring and intimate true story told in picture and word that will be cherished by mothers and daughters, by fashion lovers and photography fans, by those grieving the loss of a loved one or anyone suffering from or affected by Alzheimer's.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Photographs from My Mother's Clothes (Click on Photos to Enlarge)

"There is a desire on the part of many photographers to examine their lives through the cataloguing and documenting of familial objects. Jeannette Montgomery Barron has a body of work, My

Mother's Clothes, that has resonated with the photography and the fashion worlds, and with the offspring of women with a strong sense of style. My Mother's Clothes...represents a universal approach to understanding a parent through the choices they made about their wardrobes, and the evocative details and sensory traces that are left behind."-Aline Smithson, Lenscratch"[My Mother's Clothes] is a heartwarming, daughter-to-mother love letter that belongs on every fashionista's bookshelf...thoughtful and chic." • Rachel Zoe, The Zoe Report "Sumptuously shot and rich in color and texture...each of the photographs is accompanied by a short statement or anecdotes, memories, and family history that Barron shares about her mother, weaving together the story of a strong, refined Southern dame." • Eliza Honey, The New Yorker "Between the photos, shot against unexpected backgrounds (a Persian rug, a sunlit window, a field of grass), and Ms. Barron's straightforward, unsentimental prose, the book brings the clothes and the woman who wore them back to vivid life...a transporting read." • Ralph Gardner, Jr., The Wall Street Journal "...Montgomery Barron has provided a portrait, not just of the arc of a life, but a place, a time. It could not be a more evocative book."-Caroline Reynolds Milbank, 1stDibs.com "...dives deeper into the memories that are attached to clothes. Barron photographed garments chosen from her mother's closet. Each dress, blazer, slip or swimsuit became a still life. Sometimes the garments were shot against a backdrop of plain fabric; sometimes they were laid out in the snow; sometimes they just seemed to float. She searches for personality, character, perhaps even a little bit of life spirit."-Robin Givhan, The Washington Post "Clothes become shorthand for experiences, and powerful triggers of memories. In Jeannette Montgomery Barron's series of photographs and written recollections, it becomes that much harder to claim that fashion is mere triviality. In some cases, it is life itself." -Alexandra Marshall, T, The New York Times Style Magazine "An extraordinary biography, created through 100 color photographs of clothing, shoes and handbags, plus all the portraits of Eleanor, the mother of Jeannette Montgomery Barron, author of My Mother's Clothes."-Vanity Fair Italia "Montgomery Barron has created a small gem of a book, which is both an homage to her mother and a reminder to take the time to savor what's special about those we love." Marigny Dupuy, The New Orleans Times-Picayune "Barron captures [the clothes] in a way that gives them character, charm, personality. Juxtaposing texture and pattern, and alternating between casual composition and formal portraiture, she showcases the clothes, shoes and handbags in a manner as quirky as the collection...Through this charming little book of images and succinct commentary, she has found a way to honor her mother that suits them both." • Michelle Jones, The Dallas Morning News "Anyone who has a relative with Alzheimer's can relate to

photographer/author Jeannette Montgomery Barron's new book, *My Mother's Clothes*." -Christina Mitchell, *Courier-Post* "[My Mother's Clothes] is a must read for every daughter and people who are confronted directly or not with Alzheimer's...full of energy and hope." • Delphine Hervieu, *Swide Magazine* "A charming and fashion-packed 'album of memories.' Eleanor Morgan Montgomery Atuk was obviously an incredible and beloved woman, who most certainly had exquisite taste in clothes. I absolutely adored it." -Lisa Smilor, Associate Executive Director, Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) "Clothes are ultimately ephemeral. Good books aren't. Jeannette Montgomery Barron has engineered a small bit of alchemy - her mother...lives on in these pages." -Jesse Kornbluth, *HeadButler.com* "A poignant journey through time and memory uncovers the roots of a beautiful mother-daughter relationship." Cesare Cunaccia, *Vogue Italia*.-Cesare Cunaccia, *Vogue Italia* "This book is a tenderhearted tribute to her mother, an interesting look back at fashion of the mid-twentieth century, and an intriguing way for readers to think about memory."-Foreword magazine "Barron creates an inspiring and true story about the connection between fashion and memory." • -Ablemarle Magazine "My Mother's Clothes has a beautiful light touch, ultimately life-affirming in the face of a terrible disease. It almost feels like a travel memoir where one is transported to another time and a charmed place - where good deeds, gracious manners, and impeccable taste prevails." -Ralph Gardner Jr, contributor to the *New York Times*, *Daily Beast* and *Huffington Post* "My Mother's Clothes: An Album of Memories comes from a photographer who creates a fine portrait and memoir of her late mother through her clothing and personal possessions. Her visual album was intended to spark her mother's memories as her Alzheimer's progressed - and became both a memorial and art work celebrating her mother's love for exquisite clothes. Recommended for art and general library holdings alike!"-California Bookwatch

The loss of any loved one is painful, but the loss of one's mother, the earthly severance from the primal connection to our source of being, is profoundly shattering. Since we are given virtually no guide for dying and death, we cope in various, sometimes surprising, ways. The origin of this book was the serendipitous discovery of a way to retrieve the increasingly fading memory of the author's mother via her lifelong love of clothes, but to regard it as simply a catalogue of fashion and of one woman's exquisite collection would be a mistake. Rather, the clothes became a provocative and creative vehicle for a daughter to hold onto her mother for just as long as possible. It is through those material objects that she, unknowingly, embarked on that mysterious journey for which few of us are equipped--the earthly release of a loved one. It is through those outfits and personal effects

that she was able to cope with pain and fear, to live among the ever-present reminders of mortality. It is through those talismans that the author reached a deeper understanding of her mother-and of herself. Focusing full energy on what became an intimate dance of sorts between herself and her mother, she sparked her mother's memory with favored outfits and recorded her comments, then meticulously--and uniquely--photographed them. The dance continued until the life and spirit of her mother were captured on paper and, wondrously, the source of great anguish and immense pain became the source of joy. This book is a gift. It's a generous and acutely sensitive account of creative survival and growth through doing the unthinkable--letting one's mother go. By sharing her particular experience--beautiful and rich with painfully intimate moments and photographs--the author reflects experiences that are universal and, thus, speak to everyone. It's a story of the grand triumph of a woman who, through a daughter's devotion, lived life to its very end, remained engaged in things unrelated to death, and, through those she loved, extended her earthly mortality. In some not-so-insignificant way, her mother has become the book.

Can I just say I loved this book? It was poignant and beautiful. My own Grandmother recently died, and I love looking at her silk scarves and scent bottles. This book captures these memories and remind us of how things and objects and clothes can be infused with someone's spirit. The book is truly gorgeous and reflects a daughter's respect for her mother's love of clothing and well, for her Mum in general. The things people love and cherish tell us who they are. Even when they're no longer here. Run don't walk-you need this book.

I too have taken photos and written about my moms clothes and other items. It is a great thing to do for any relative you have loved so the memory of them lives on for future generations that did not get to know them. That is what this book inspired me to do. Beautiful photos and writing. One of my favorites.

This book is a moving tribute to a mother. You experience the love of her daughter in every photo. The reader is allow into this special relationship. This is a perfect gift.

In the fashion Olympics, Eleanor Morgan Montgomery Atuk was a Gold Medalist. She was born with more taste than money. Then she married a successful businessman, and her collecting began. She was beautiful to begin with --- one year, she was praised for "the best legs" in Atlanta --- and the clothes she bought enhanced her beauty, and on top of all of that was her personality, which

was effervescent in the extreme. Wire hangers? Never. Ellie had museum-quality closets. She took inventory often, adding to her collection the way an aesthete might buy art. Then her husband left her --- for a Playboy bunny, yet --- and wasn't it lucky that she had Bill Blass and other designers to fill some of that gap. Ellie's daughter, Jeannette Montgomery Barron, is a noted photographer. When her mother started losing her memory --- "It was like watching Sandy Koufax lose his pitching arm," Jeannette's husband has recalled --- Jeannette discovered that she still had a firm grip on her closet. All they had to do was stand near a dress or a jacket, and the memories would flood in, and Ellie would tell a story --- a brilliant, stylish personal story, a story only she could tell. Jeannette lived in Rome, her mother in Charlottesville, Virginia. After each visit to her mother, Jeannette would take a few pieces back to Italy, scout around for the right fabric to use as background, and immortalize a fraction of her mother's collection. She did this again and again, and even when Ellie developed Alzheimer's, she could still identify each piece, where she'd worn it and what she did that day. Now there is *My Mother's Clothes*, "an album of memories." It's a smallish book, very much in the spirit of its subject --- tasteful pictures of clothes both classic and outlandish, and a scrapbook of family snapshots, linked by short, evocative paragraphs by the author. Think of it as a visit with a long-lost aunt, who has only an hour to show you her life. She deals the memories and images like playing cards, and almost every one is a winner. The project began as a way of grieving for her mother, but Jeannette says it quickly became a joyful project. "I don't think of it as a sad thing," she says. "I see it as a celebration of her life." My own mother is now 93 and still formidable; as she looks back, she sees a laundry list of achievements. But there could have been more of them. And the peaks could have been higher. Why didn't that happen? Because she was a child of the Depression; early on, she had to help support her family. And, back then, many doors were simply closed to women. Maybe I'm projecting here, but I see Ellie as a woman much like my mother. Burdened by the codes of the South and the strictures of married life in corporate Atlanta, she looked around for a way to burn her prodigious energy and engage her artistic imagination --- and there was fashion, just waiting. "It's easier to walk through doors than walls," the Buddha said. Ellie did. Clothes are ultimately ephemeral. Good books aren't. Jeannette Montgomery Barron has engineered a small bit of alchemy --- her mother, dead and gone, lives on in these pages.

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