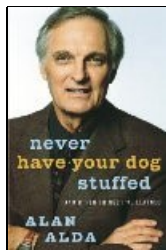


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Book Review
Never Have Your Dog Stuffed
And Other Things I've Learned
by [Alan Alda](#)

Reviewer: [Geoff Wisner](#), Staff Reviewer
Posted: November 30, 2005

I haven't read many celebrity autobiographies, but it's hard for me to believe that there are many as well-written as this one, or that manage to be so engaging and yet so modest.

No one who watched Alan Alda during his 11-year run as Hawkeye Pierce on *M*A*S*H* should be surprised that he writes with intelligence and a hint of melancholy. Some may be surprised, though, that although he tells his story with plenty of humor, there is very little jokiness — so little that the handful of actual jokes seem a little awkward.

Alan Alda grew up in a show-business family, and some of his earlier memories are of hanging out with the chorus girls while his parents performed in a burlesque show. "There would be an opening number in which my father stood on the side of the stage and sang while chorus girls danced and showed their breasts. The person who performed this job in burlesque was called, with cheerful clarity, 'the tit singer.'" Alda's relationship with his parents — his rivalry with his actor father, and his struggle to accept his mentally ill mother — is sensitively developed over the course of the book.


Along the way we learn about the rude shock to Alda's system that came with leaving the showbiz world for the chilly world of "civilians," his spotty education, his efforts to develop an infallible system for betting on horses, and his gradual mastery of the craft of acting. We learn about several occasions when Alda was nearly killed while acting, and the time when he was briefly taken hostage while making a film at a prison. And we even get some valuable lessons about life — including the importance of never having your dog stuffed.

About the article's author

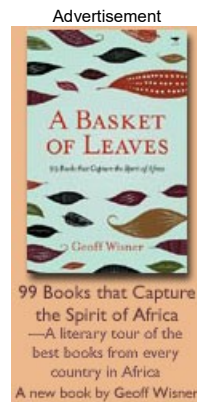
About the Reviewer

Geoff Wisner is a freelance writer and staff member of Indigocafe.com. He is the author of [A Basket of Leaves: 99 Books That Capture the Spirit of Africa](#). Visit his website at www.geoffwisner.com.



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—Mahatma Gandhi