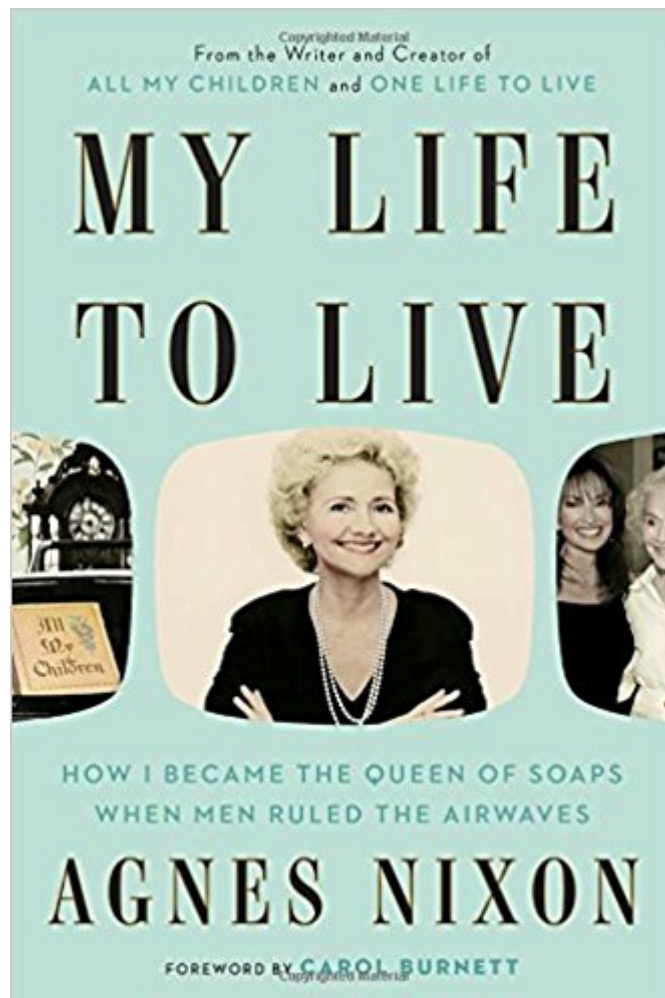




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# My Life To Live: How I Became The Queen Of Soaps When Men Ruled The Airwaves



## Synopsis

From the Emmy-winning creator and writer of *All My Children* and *One Life to Live*, *Before There Was Erica Kane* is a memoir of her trailblazing rise to the top of the television industry, including behind-the-scenes stories from some of the most beloved soaps of all time. Before there was Erica Kane, Adam Chandler, or Victoria Lord, there was Agnes Nixon, a young girl who dreamed up stories for paper dolls. Those tales she imagined--ones filled with ambitions, rivalries, and romances--would soon parallel her own path to success. In a memoir filled with as much drama as the soaps she penned, Nixon shares her journey from Nashville to New York City, as she overcomes the loss of her fiancé in World War II, a father intent on crushing her writing dreams, and the jealousy of her male colleagues on her way to becoming one of the most successful names in television. While fans will delight in Nixon's own incredible life, they will also love her behind-the-scenes insight into her most popular shows. Inside, she shares the inspiration for Erica Kane and how she cast Susan Lucci in the role; an excerpt from the never-before-seen *All My Children* story bible; entertaining anecdotes about her shows' beloved casts and special guests, including Carol Burnett, Kelly Ripa, Oprah Winfrey, and Warren Buffett; and more. *Before There Was Erica Kane* is also a portrait of a pioneer. Driven to use her ratings power for good, Nixon fought and broke network taboos by wrestling with controversial social issues ranging from women's health, interracial relationships, and the Vietnam War to drug addiction, LGBT rights, and AIDS. By infusing her characters with sensitivity, humor, and humanity, she enabled millions to examine an opposite point of view. And long before Shonda Rhimes launched a golden age of female showrunners, Agnes Nixon positioned ABC to become the media giant it is today. She is a true television legend, and her candid and inspiring glimpse behind the curtain of the television industry will charm soap fans and story lovers alike.

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## Customer Reviews

"I owe my career to Agnes Nixon, who was not only a brilliant creator and writer, but also my friend. My Life to Live is full of wonderful, evocative stories from her life and career that even I hadn't heard. And in typical Agnes fashion, her storytelling is full of humanity, social relevance and delicious humor! I know that her legions of fans will treasure it as much as I do."

• Susan Lucci "Aggie Nixon is the only person I've ever known whom I didn't say awful things about. And much to my dismay, her memoir did nothing to change that. Unforgivable."

• Larry David "[Agnes's] career wasn't easy to come by. We know she won, but the story of her ups and downs make this book a true page-turner."

• Carol Burnett, from the foreword "A meaty and fascinating look into the private and professional world of the beloved television pioneer."

• Soap Opera Digest "A must-read for every soap opera fan!"

• ABC Soaps in Depth "In her heartfelt book, [Nixon] opened up about the lessons she learned about working outside the home from the women in her family. While telling socially relevant stories on All My Children, Nixon also infused glamour, adventure and a lot of romance."

• ABC.com "[An] engaging memoir Not only does it provide all manner of detail about characters and incidents over those tumultuous years, but it shows the determination to make a difference which was her abiding motivation."

• Martin Rubin, Washington Times

Agnes Nixon was a writer and producer, best known for creating the Emmy Award-winning soap operas All My Children, One Life to Live, and Loving. In 1981, Nixon received the rarely presented Trustees Award from the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, becoming the first writer and first woman to be honored. A member of the Television Hall of Fame, Nixon was also the first female writer to join the Soap Opera Hall of Fame, and in 2010, she received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

Agnes Nixon has always been an idol of mine since I was a child. She created two beloved soap

operas, "All My Children" and "One Life To Live, and outlived them by a few years sadly. She began her writing career in college and as an apprentice to the late legend Irna Phillips. From her upbringing as an only child of divorced parents in Nashville, Agnes also known as Aggie dreamed of becoming writer from an early age. This memoir is long overdue for a figure such as Agnes Nixon. She married the love of her life, Bob Nixon, and raised four children in suburban Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, Agnes doesn't get credit for her genius in writing and developing unforgettable and unique characters like Susan Lucci's Erica Kane or Ruth Warrick's Phoebe Tyler on "All My Children" or Erika Slezak's Viki Lord on "One Life to Live." She had her own bible for "All My Children" for five years until she was offered the opportunity. Stars came and went to Pine Valley and Llanview. The forward was written by All My Children fan, Carol Burnett, who played Verla Grubbs. Agnes Nixon would be inducted into the Television Hall of Fame and the Soap Opera Hall of Fame (not that it matters anymore). There are only four soap operas on the air and none from Agnes Nixon. The four remaining soaps are fighting for survival. Soaps weren't given the proper respect in Agnes' life. Irna Phillips, the pioneer and mother of soap opera television and radio, was never inducted into the Television Hall of Fame nor was she honored with Stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for Television and Radio nor induction into their Hall of Fames. Agnes Nixon herself doesn't have a Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for Television. Agnes Nixon was never awarded the Kennedy Center Honors, America's highest honor, nor was she awarded the National Medal of the Arts. She has written thousands of stories and scripts herself. Her writings have been donated to her college, Northwestern University School of Communication and the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communication. She was also a dedicated wife and mother as well as writer. Her father never believed in her abilities. She began developing her writing skills by playing with paper dolls cutting them out of the Sunday funnies. She lost her first love in World War II. Her parents' divorce had affected her relationship with her father who lived in Chicago while she lived in Nashville with her mother's family.

I finished the book last night after starting it on Thursday evening. My respect for Mrs. Nixon was great before I read her story, but with this final piece of work, she refreshes us on the lesson to never assume. It is easy to view Mrs. Nixon (Ag) as a woman of privilege. And though she did earn that through her hard work and trailblazing, she never forgot who she was. Though I would have liked more insight into her other work (such as head writer of *Another World* and how the *All My Children* bible influenced her) and the profession challenges she had, similar to the issue on 'Search for

Tomorrow' (why did she pull back from *One Life to Live*, the power play between her and ABC those last years, the lose of the warehouse that housed tapes of the early episodes of OLTL and AMC, etc.), I still marveled at her grace (no naming the writer who said they did not believe in character motivation) and her gratitude. Yes, there are some date and reference inconstancies that momentarily detract from the book, but the power of Mrs. Nixon story is not diminished by these issues. Reading about the challenges she had to complete this memoir, on her own terms, gives me a sense of pride in a way. For as she said over and over, she saw the company and the viewers as all her children, Mrs. Nixon was *"All Our Aggie"*.

Before there was Erica Kane, Adam Chandler, or Victoria Lord, there was Agnes Nixon, a young girl who dreamed up stories for paper dolls. Those tales she imagined *"ones filled with ambitions, rivalries, and romances"* would soon parallel her own path to success. In a memoir filled with as much drama as the soaps she penned, Nixon shares her journey from Nashville to New York City, as she overcomes the loss of her fiancé in World War II, a father intent on crushing her writing dreams, and the jealousy of her male colleagues on her way to becoming one of the most successful names in television. While fans will delight in Nixon's own incredible life, they will also love her behind-the-scenes insight into her most popular shows. Inside, she shares the inspiration for Erica Kane and how she cast Susan Lucci in the role; an excerpt from the never-before-seen *All My Children* story bible; entertaining anecdotes about her shows' beloved casts and special guests, including Carol Burnett, Kelly Ripa, Oprah Winfrey, and Warren Buffett; and more. But *My Life to Live* is also a portrait of a pioneer. Driven to use her ratings power for good, Nixon fought and broke network taboos by wrestling with controversial social issues ranging from women's health, interracial relationships, and the Vietnam War to drug addiction, LGBT rights, and AIDS. By infusing her characters with sensitivity, humor, and humanity, she enabled millions to examine an opposite point of view. And long before Shonda Rhimes launched a golden age of female showrunners, Agnes Nixon positioned ABC to become the media giant it is today. She is a true television legend, and her candid and inspiring glimpse behind the curtain of the television industry will charm soap fans and story lovers alike. My Thoughts: I became a fan of *"soap operas"* in the 1960s when I first had some time at home in the daytime. Guiding Light was one of my favorites, and Agnes Nixon was a writer on that soap for a while. *One Life to Live*, another of her creations, was one I first saw in the 1970s, and then again just before the show

went off the air. By the time it was canceled, I was hooked. And happy to hear that it would go online, along with All My Children, which I had just started watching. But that happy dream did not last long. She has, rightly, been touted as the Queen of Soaps, and reading how she came to write for soaps in a world dominated by men was definitely engaging. Her own life could have been a soap drama, with losses and conflicts, not to mention seeing racism up close and personal in her hometown. Using what she knew and what she had lived in her stories, and bringing social relevance to daytime, would be her trademark. It was how she captured the love of the fans. A memoir that drew me in from the first pages, *My Life to Live: How I Became the Queen of Soaps When Men Ruled the Airwaves* earned 5 stars from me.

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