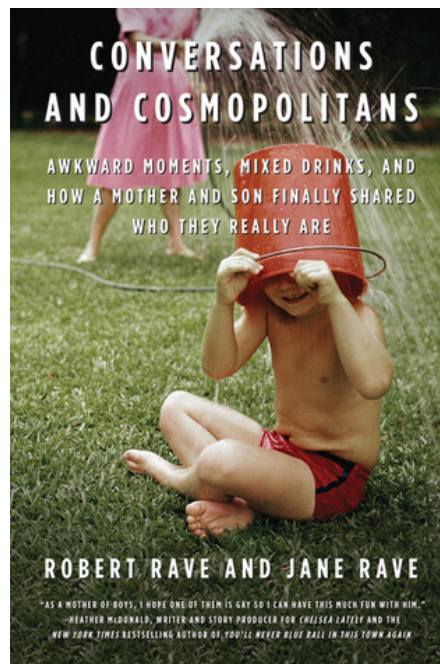




Conversations and Cosmopolitans: Awkward Moments, Mixed Drinks, and How a Mother and Son Finally Shared Who They Really Are

Robert Rave , Jane Rave

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Part Augusten Burroughs, part Robert Leleux, *Conversations and Cosmopolitans* is a hilarious and touching memoir written by a mother, Jane, and her son, Robert, as they navigate their new relationship together after Robert announces in a hand-written letter that he is gay.

Conversations and Cosmopolitans: Awkward Moments, Mixed Drinks, and How a Mother and Son Finally Shared Who They Really Are Details

Date : Published November 8th 2011 by St. Martins Press-3pl (first published September 1st 2006)

ISBN : 9780312554231

Author : Robert Rave , Jane Rave

Format : Paperback 304 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir, Humor, Biography Memoir, Lgbt, Adult



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Cheryl says

OMG. This book had me laughing so much. I can not remember the last time that I had such a fun time reading a book. I love Mrs. Rave. She is a sweetheart and knows all the right things to say. Of course, Mr. Rave is priceless. Like when Robert was going to get waxed and his dad gave an analogy about how he did not see a problem if his son wanted to get some things waxed as when he and Mrs. Rave first moved into their home, the back yard was over grown and they did not want anyone to come over until they had cleaned it up. Thus this classic line from Mr. Rave "I'm saying Robert needs to trim his tree and bush before anyone spends time in his backyard."

Another favorite chapter of mine was when Robert was teaching his mom about the "gay glossary". As you can imagine words can carry different meanings in the "gay glossary". I have to say that one that really stuck with me and had me almost in tears from laughter was "Flagger"

Flagger

Mrs. Rave's Definition: Someone in a gang or rough around the edges.

Actual Gay Definition: Someone in the middle of a nightclub or party who starts twirling flags around;
ANNOYING!

There are many more great moments like the Cosmopolitan incident...Cosmopolitan 3 versus Mrs. Rave 0. Though as much as I am a fan of Robert's. I have read both Waxed and Spin, which are both great by the way. I have to admit that Mrs. Rave kind of stole the spotlight. Reading her point of view after each chapter was classic. If anything, reading this book mad me love Robert even more and his family. If you want to read a really good book about love, family bond, and a mother and son relationship of growth and discovering one's self than you have to run not walk or click purchase with your mouse and get a copy of Conversations and Cosmopolitans: Awkward Moments, Mixed Drinks, and How a Mother and Son Finally Shared Who They Really Are.

Stephanie says

Wonderful, Wonderful, Wonderful. I recently received an advance copy of this novel and I'm very glad I did. This mother/son team delivers a very accurate look into homosexual culture, as well as its effect on family life. This memoir contains some extremely eccentric New Yorkers that will keep any reader sufficiently entertained.

The first thing I really enjoyed about the book was the format. The other part of the book's format that I enjoyed was the authors' alternating voices each chapter. First, the reader gets Robert's story, then mom chimes in afterward to give her perspective. This prevents them from competing for the reader's attention and creates a clear-cut separation of thoughts, opinions, and experiences during each situation presented. A 20-something gay New Yorker's perspective is clearly much different from his middle-aged Midwestern

mother's. As time goes on however, we see the differences become less and less as mother and son connect on deeper levels.

An author can paraphrase and summarize communications between the characters, but the Raves took it to a whole new level, including online messaging transcripts, e-mails, and letters written during the pivotal events in their lives. These give a more accurate look at the relationship between mother and son, and show the evolution of their relationship as they both become more comfortable and familiar with Robert's lifestyle, and become more comfortable in their own relationship to each other.

I especially liked chapter sixteen, titled "The Daughter-in-Law You'll Never Have (Also known to my parents as my best friend Melissa). I laughed out loud several times during this chapter! The crazy antics Robert and his best friend get into during a weekend out in New York City were a welcome change from the chapters of sadness and awkwardness from loneliness, rejection, credit card debt, and trying to "make it" in the real world. I also really liked that Melissa brings Robert out of his shell more than any other person we encounter, requiring him to down massive amounts of sugar and Diet Coke to keep up with her voracious energy and enthusiasm. She's confident and suave, where as Robert is unsure and awkward. A perfectly matched duo to run amok in Central Park and Midtown, chasing guys.

Clearly, I don't have anything negative to say about this book. The characters are strong and continually develop as life throws more their way. It's not only about a son's homosexuality and how the family changes once they find out, but it says a lot about the love and loyalty of a mother to her child. Despite discrimination and negative responses in a small town, Jane stands her ground on several occasions and speaks out to protect and promote her son and his lifestyle- even to close family friends. I give it four out of five stars.

Holly says

I tend to read lots of fiction and non-fiction dealing with gay rights, coming out, etc. This one seemed like it would be fabulous. Robert and his mother, Jane, each give their side to the story of Robert's coming out. I still remember the day my brother came out to me (in a story, no less) so I was looking forward to reading about this family. I actually had a hard time with their "voices" at the beginning, sort of like trying to get to know someone. It felt a little awkward at first, but after about 20 pages, it was smooth and funny and they both seemed to get in a rhythm and had some fun with it.

I first rated this a 3 star, but after thinking about it more, I upped it by one. It's a quick read, but quite enjoyable.

Rodney Rodriguez says

I received my copy for free in the Goodreads First Reads program. I'm gay, from the midwest and a bit of a voyeur so naturally this book was appealing to me. And I was lucky enough to win a copy from goodreads in one of their give aways. It's the first memoir I can ever remember reading from a gay author AND his mother. I was thoroughly entertained by Robert Rave's stories. I found myself able to identify with him on so many levels. "Mama says" is refreshing, hard to believe that a midwestern woman from a small town is so open minded and accepting. I fell in love with mama! When are we meeting for Cosmos?

Mary (BookHounds) says

Robert Rave has written his memoir with the help of his mother and Jane Rave captured my heart. The first chapter opens with the letter Robert wrote his parents to tell them he is gay. All Robert remembers is that his mother pointed out all his grammatical mistakes. His mother remembers it quite differently, but that fact she didn't respond to the elephant in the room in a way to make him uncomfortable and instead focused more on his writing skills, which seems unintentional, but it is a mother's love that stays positive while she was distressed. This give and take between the two is quite magical and honest.

I can really see where Robert gets his skill for words since his mother has a very conversational tone about hers. This book isn't really about Robert coming out, but more about the close relationship he shares with his mother and how that bond was built. I swear there were some points when I was thankful she asked some of the things she did and Robert had such a strong relationship with her that he could answer so honestly. There is a lot of humor woven in as well as those bittersweet moments. If you are a fan of humor-filled memoirs with a skewed look on life, then you will enjoy this one!

Sasha Strader says

I had assumed, when I signed up to win this from Librarything, that I was getting a fiction (or at least fictionalized) book about a gay son coming out to his parents and bonding with his mother. When I first started to read the book and saw that it was actually nonfiction in a sort of diary format, I was irked: I don't generally like that kind of book.

However, I read further and I'm entirely glad I did. Even if you're usually a fan of plotlines and the story-telling point of view, this is an incredibly well written book and I doubt you'll be disappointed in it. Furthermore, while the son's sexuality is mentioned as a large part of the book, I feel it was more like a catalyst for his relationship with his mother. In fact, the book is almost more about her.

Not the absolute best thing I've ever read, but certainly up there!

Barry Levy says

Several years ago I met Robert and Jane Rave at a gay event in New York City. I bought a copy of their book which they graciously signed, and what a nice read it turned out to be. A gay son and his mom write alternating chapters on coming out, Weight Watchers, dating and, in the two best segments, discrimination and a near-death experience. There were times when I laughed out loud, cringed at Robert's insecurities, while nodding my head in recognition at some of my own.

Unfortunately, the hardcover edition I read, published by iUniverse, could have used a more careful edit. Places and passages of time were not always clear. And there were typos. Also, Virginia Woolf is not spelled with an "e" after the "f."

But let me end on a positive note. I recommend the book to anyone gay, straight or in-between. And that last line, delivered by Mama, will make you smile and maybe even applaud.

Elisabeth says

I had a lot of hope for this book, but it was just okay. It's co-authored by a mother and her son, but instead of collaborating on each chapter, they each write their own chapters. The book alternates between his voice and hers, usually spending two chapters to cover the same story or event from each person's perspective. You won't want to stab your eyes out, but it will hardly change your life. At the very least, you'll probably smile fondly at what seems to be a pretty solid bond in their family.

Melissa says

You know how, on TV, there are were those parents who everyone wanted for their own parents? If you grew up in the 70s or 80s, you know what and who I'm talking about. Parents like Mr. and Mrs. Cunningham, or Bob and Carol Brady. Parents who were the epitome of cool, who you could tell anything to.

Well, after reading Conversations and Cosmopolitans, I think that Ron and Jane Rave should be designated the adoptive parents for every gay person in America. Everyone should have people like this - who react like this - when they come out. (Especially when they come out.)

"After talking with Robert and letting him know we loved him anyway, I think he felt somewhat relieved that he didn't have to pretend anymore with the people he loved most. His dad and I felt the same: Robert was our son, and being gay didn't really matter. At that moment, the most important thing for us was to make sure our son know we loved him and would always be there for him ... no matter what. And I think we did a good job proving that to him that day." (pg. 37)

Conversations and Cosmopolitans is a memoir written by a mother (that would be Jane) and her son (that's Robert). We're introduced to the Rave family shortly after Robert writes a letter to his parents informing them that he's gay. (This is now infamously known in the Rave household as "the gay letter.") Reading this book is like pulling a chair up to the Rave kitchen table and listening to the old family stories.

While reading this, Robert and Jane become your new best friends, and that's due in large part to the structure of the memoir's narrative, which works incredibly well in this book. We're treated first to Robert's perspective of a particular event or situation, followed by Jane's take on the same happenstance. It's like listening to two people tell you a story, and you find yourself watching ping-pong match style from one to the other.

There's the one about Jane getting drunk on cosmopolitans during that crazy night in New York with Robert's friends - a group that included a new actor named Rupert Everett. There's the story of Robert's disappointing (and expensive) summer when he rented a Fire Island beach house with several guys. And then, of course, the one about the birthday party dinner for the obnoxious friend who always has to be the center of attention. (There's one in every group, gay or straight or whatever else.)

All of this can be (and is) entertaining ... to a point.

For the most part, I enjoyed this memoir. Maybe because I'm a mom, but her parts of the book resonated more with me than Robert's did. At times, I found myself almost skimming over some of his narrative in

order to get to Jane's down-to-earth, perspective. Maybe that's what I personally need right now. I dunno.

I'll start sounding a little nit-picky here, but I do have to mention that there were a few rocky editing issues that kind of irked me. One such error occurs IN THE THIRD SENTENCE of the book. (It's Virginia WOOLF, not Virginia Wolfe.) Then, we have the story about mom downing cosmos with a budding actor named Rupert Everett in a little movie called "My Best Friend's Wedding" ... but several chapters later when Robert flips on the TV and sees "My Best Friend's Wedding" starring Rupert Everett, there's no mention of the night of debauchery or even that Robert was once acquainted with him.

There are also a few situations that seem almost too rushed. Much of the book is focused on Robert's lack of a boyfriend and his efforts to attract one. We go through chapter after chapter of this - some entertaining, some sympathetic, some a little on the woe-is-me side of life, some a combination of all three - and then bam! Turn the page to Chapter 19, which begins "My ex-boyfriend and I were physically and culturally complete opposites."

Whoa, huh? Who? What? Where did THAT come from?

Also, one of the themes of the memoir is learning who you (and your loved ones) really are. In Jane's life, she has had to come to terms with having become pregnant in high school, and the aftermath of being shunned by her community. It's not unlike the discrimination faced by people who are gay, who don't have the same rights as others, who are castigated as being less than everyone else.

I was expecting this parallel to take a more prominent focus in the book than it did. Even though it's mentioned on the back cover as a pivotal connection between mother and son, we don't learn about Jane's teenage pregnancy until the last 20 pages of the memoir. I think the book's narrative would have been much stronger had we been privy to some of the conversations they had about this connection and discovery about who they are and how we have the ability to overcome what others thought about us - and what we wrongly believed about ourselves.

All in all, this is a light, easy, and humorous read. It would be good vacation reading. You don't have to think too hard with this one. It makes you smile, often, and above all it makes you appreciate the people who "get" us in this crazy life. No matter what our circumstances, we all need at least one person - be it a parent or a significant other or a best friend who we can tell anything to and who will stand up for us and always be by our side no matter what. Everyone should have someone like this in his or her life.

And if they don't, there's always *Conversations and Cosmopolitans*.

Thank you to TLC Book Tours for sending me *Conversations and Cosmopolitans* and for the opportunity to participate in the book tour. (Click [here](#) for the tour schedule and to see what others thought.) FTC disclosure: Although I received a copy of the book from the publisher via TLC Book Tours, I was not compensated in any way for this review.

Jay says

Conversations and Cosmopolitans is a touching book between mother and son. Robert Rave writes a chapter of various aspects of his life - coming out, friends, trips, and so forth, and his mother, Jane Rave, gives her take on the events afterwards in the Mama Says section. It's great seeing two perspectives on various events. It makes for a revealing look at how two people view the experiences they share. This book makes for a great example of how a mother and son can open up and really get close to one another, no matter the trials and

tribulations they go through.

Danielle says

If the burden of keeping a secret was no longer something you could handle and the one person you had to tell was not only your best friend but your mother as well, would you tell her? What if this secret could potentially change the entire dynamic of your relationship? For Robert, as well as a number of people, this is a reality but fortunately for him he has the love and support of a wonderful mother & friend.

Truth be told I'm a huge fan of Robert Rave and his Chick Lit novels, but I may have a conflict now...I think I may be a bigger fan of his mom. In a world where acceptance and reactions are still mixed toward gays I can only imagine how difficult it would be not only for the individual sharing the news with their loved ones but also for the loved ones themselves. What I've learned in my short time as a parent is that children are who they are and as a parent your biggest responsibility, over any other even more so than feeding & clothing, is to love them unconditionally and let them know that every day of their lives. (That's just my two cents.) Jane Rave is an incredible example of this. When Robert came-out to her and his father in the handwritten letter he sent, her reaction was immediately for him in regards to his long term happiness. It wasn't negative by any means, she simply wanted him to be happy and afforded all the opportunities we all deserve as human beings. Knowing her son the way she did, she was sure he'd be distraught about their reaction and wanted to do whatever she could to assure him they loved him and would never judge him immediately and without question.

What was truly enjoyable about this memoir, outside of the connection between Robert and his mom Jane, was the varying versions of situations through each of their eyes. The way the story was told was through situations they both experienced, first being told by Robert and then by Jane. They weren't always present and sometimes it was Jane's reaction to Robert's relay of the situation via phone or email, but it was often heartwarming and sometimes incredibly hilarious. What was even funnier was often his Dad's reaction to certain situations like the announcement he was going to get waxed. Because Robert never truly acted on his homosexuality prior to telling his parents it was as if both he and his mother were experiencing everything for the first time. Having two older children, a boy and a girl, Jane thought she'd experienced everything. Helping her son with his boyfriend issues wasn't something she had anticipated but she met it with the same fever and hope she had with her first two children.

After reading Conversations and Cosmopolitans I'd definitely say I not only have a continued desire to pick up more of Robert's novels as they are published, but I have a huge amount of respect for his mother Jane. It's obvious that Robert inherited much of his writing ability from his mom as well as his ability to love. For my part, as a parent, I think I enjoyed hearing Jane's side of the story even more than Robert's because of her insights on parenting, friendship and her own personal struggles to find her own identity throughout her life. This was a positively delightful memoir to read and one I think everyone should read. This is a memoir that sheds new light on an often difficult situation for many, but is more than simply a story about a gay man coming out to his family. It's a story about love, hope, life and enjoying & being who we truly are.

Rob says

Conversations and Cosmopolitans by Robert and Jane Rave was not the book I expected. Based on the cover images and description, I expected a humor book. However, this book was a cross between a number of styles of writing- part memoir, part social commentary, part therapist session, and, yes, part humor.

Essentially, the book is mostly writing by Robert and starts with his coming out to his parents. It then follows the ups and downs of his life- work, dating, family relations, the normal aspects of life. Interspersed between chapters are reflections by his mother. The writing is above average and the book moves along. It is not a particularly difficult read. It would have been nice to have some more commentary by his mother, I think it would have filled out the book. However, overall it was a good book. I would call it a good beach read.

Julie G says

This book is a memoir of sorts coauthored by a mother and son. Robert Rave came out to his parents in a letter at the age of 21 and his announcement prompted his mother to embark on her own discovery of who she really was outside of her life as a mother and wife. This book follows some of the conversations, emails, and life events they shared as they both became honest with each other and themselves about who they were.

Writing

The writing was somewhat less than impressive for me. There were portions that rang true and genuine, especially from Jane, but a lot of Robert's writing was awkward, particularly his dialogue. It seemed stiff and unnatural. I also felt like several sections didn't really serve any purpose in the book. It was kind of like hearing a coworker tell you a series of unrelated, mundane stories along the lines of "then I pulled the milk carton out of the fridge and - you'll never guess - the milk had gone bad!" And you nod along and pretend to be amused but really you're just wondering why they think this is significant enough to tell. In the book's case there were plenty of moments that fit perfectly and were truly significant but also a fair amount that were kind of dull and meaningless.

Entertainment Value

I suppose the dull parts could fit in this section as well. I was just bored with too many portions to say it was truly entertaining. There were some very funny stories, but overall it just didn't resonate with me in any particularly attention grabbing way. I was ready for it to be over. I also hate to say this, since Robert Rave is obviously a real person, but man he drove me nuts with the doormat behavior. Several times in the book I wanted his mama to grab him by the shoulder and shake him and tell him to stop letting people take advantage of him. It's probably because I have a thing for mamas in general, but I did truly love Jane. She was adorable and obviously a loving and devoted mother.

Overall: Meh. I think there are better books to spend your time on - it gets a "do not recommend".

Sara Strand says

First off, anyone who knows that I am a huge supporter of LGBT rights and advocacy. It's a damn shame that even in 2011 a person has to live in fear because of who they love yet we as a society praise young men and women to be absolute whores (hello, Jersey Shore) and that's totally fine. It's kind of ass backwards if you ask me.

What also is a shame is that there are thousands of people out there who face shame and disapproval from their families because of who they are. As a parent myself my hopes for my children is that they lead the life

they want and are happy. I think there are two ways to really tell how great a parent you are: 1. Does your child still worry about your approval well into their adulthood and 2. Are they able to talk to you?

Both of these are answered by the mother and son duo of Robert and Jane Rave. Robert starts this memoir by talking about the letter he wrote to his parents explaining that he is a gay man, he's OK with it, and he hopes they are OK with it. Not going to lie, it breaks my heart as a mom to think that a child would ever feel like they would be less loved by their parents but it's a reality.

This book was absolutely fantastic because Jane sounds like a really supportive and loving mom. I also really appreciated Robert's openness of his life and how he was feeling at such a turning point in his life. And to be honest, I don't think I would ever feel comfortable having the experiences and conversations he has with his mom with my own. But maybe that's why I loved the book- you can read the chapter and feel just as awkward as Robert did. I also loved how Robert would tell a story and the following chapter is Jane's point of view or add commentary that just makes the whole thing even better.

Bottom line? You need to read this book. If you are a parent then you will love this and end up hoping you end up as cool of a mom as Jane.

Danielle says

If the burden of keeping a secret was no longer something you could handle and the one person you had to tell was not only your best friend but your mother as well, would you tell her? What if this secret could potentially change the entire dynamic of your relationship? For Robert, as well as a number of people, this is a reality but fortunately for him he has the love and support of a wonderful mother & friend.

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My original review was posted at [Chick Lit Reviews and News](#).
