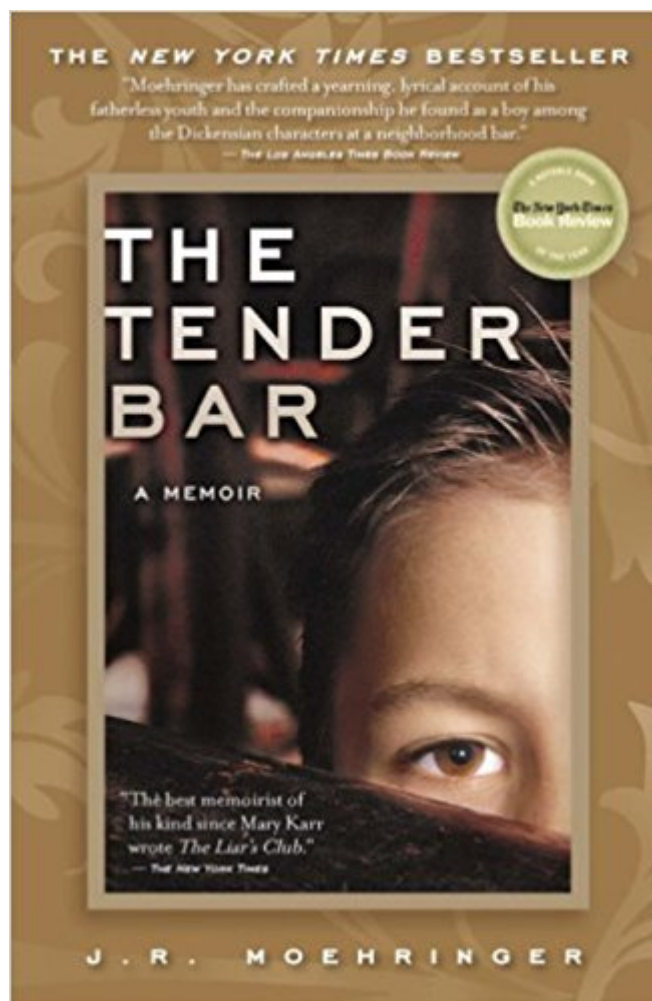


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The Tender Bar: A Memoir



Synopsis

The New York Times bestseller and one of the 100 Most Notable Books of 2005. In the tradition of *This Boy's Life* and *The Liar's Club*, a raucous, poignant, luminously written memoir about a boy striving to become a man, and his romance with a bar. J.R. Moehringer grew up captivated by a voice. It was the voice of his father, a New York City disc jockey who vanished before J.R. spoke his first word. Sitting on the stoop, pressing an ear to the radio, J.R. would strain to hear in that plummy baritone the secrets of masculinity and identity. Though J.R.'s mother was his world, his rock, he craved something more, something faintly and hauntingly audible only in *The Voice*. At eight years old, suddenly unable to find *The Voice* on the radio, J.R. turned in desperation to the bar on the corner, where he found a rousing chorus of new voices. The alphas along the bar--including J.R.'s Uncle Charlie, a Humphrey Bogart look-alike; Colt, a Yogi Bear sound-alike; and Joey D, a softhearted brawler--took J.R. to the beach, to ballgames, and ultimately into their circle. They taught J.R., tended him, and provided a kind of fathering-by-committee. Torn between the stirring example of his mother and the lurid romance of the bar, J.R. tried to forge a self somewhere in the center. But when it was time for J.R. to leave home, the bar became an increasingly seductive sanctuary, a place to return and regroup during his picaresque journeys. Time and again the bar offered shelter from failure, rejection, heartbreak--and eventually from reality. In the grand tradition of landmark memoirs, *The Tender Bar* is suspenseful, wrenching, and achingly funny. A classic American story of self-invention and escape, of the fierce love between a single mother and an only son, it's also a moving portrait of one boy's struggle to become a man, and an unforgettable depiction of how men remain, at heart, lost boys.

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Customer Reviews

"Long before it legally served me, the bar saved me," asserts J.R. Moehringer, and his compelling memoir *The Tender Bar* is the story of how and why. A Pulitzer-Prize winning writer for the *Los Angeles Times*, Moehringer grew up fatherless in pub-heavy Manhasset, New York, in a ramshackle house crammed with cousins and ruled by an eccentric, unkind grandfather. Desperate for a paternal figure, he turns first to his father, a DJ whom he can only access via the radio (Moehringer calls him *The Voice* and pictures him as "talking smoke"). When *The Voice* suddenly disappears from the airwaves, Moehringer turns to his hairless Uncle Charlie, and subsequently, Uncle Charlie's place of employment--a bar called *Dickens* that soon takes center stage. While Moehringer may occasionally resort to an overwrought metaphor (the footsteps of his family sound like "storm troopers on stilts"), his writing moves at a quick clip and his tale of a dysfunctional but tightly knit community is warmly told. "While I fear that we're drawn to what abandons us, and to what seems most likely to abandon us, in the end I believe we're defined by what embraces us," Moehringer says, and his story makes us believe it. --Brangien Davis --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

[Signature]Reviewed by Terry GolwayYou needn't be a writer to appreciate the romance of the corner tavern--or, for that matter, of the local dive in a suburban strip mall. But perhaps it does take a writer to explain the appeal of these places that ought to offend us on any number of levels--they often smell bad, the decor generally is best viewed through bloodshot eyes and, by night's end, they usually do not offer an uplifting vision of the human condition. Ah, but what would we do without them, and what would we do without the companionship of fellow pilgrims whose journey through life requires the assistance of a drop or two? J.R. Moehringer, a Pulitzer Prize-winning writer for the *Los Angeles Times*, has written a memoir that explains it all, and then some. *The Tender Bar* is the story of a young man who knows his father only as "The Voice," of a single mother struggling to make a better life for her son, and of a riotously dysfunctional family from Long Island. But more than anything else, Moehringer's book is a homage to the culture of the local pub. That's where young J.R. seeks out the companionship of male role models in place of his absent father, where he receives an education that has served him well in his career and where, inevitably, he looks for love, bemoans its absence and mourns its loss. Moehringer grew up in Manhasset, a place, he writes, that "believed in booze." At a young age,

he became a regular – not a drinker, of course, for he was far too young. But while still tender of years, he was introduced to the culture, to the companionship and – yes – to the romance of it all. "Everyone has a holy place, a refuge, where their heart is purer, their mind clearer, where they feel close to God or love or truth or whatever it is they happen to worship," he writes. For young J.R., that place was a gin mill on Plandome Road where his Uncle Charlie was a bartender and a patron. The Tender Bar's emotional climax comes after its native son has found success as a journalist for the Los Angeles Times. On September 11, 2001, almost 50 souls who lived and loved in Moehringer's home town of Manhasset were killed in the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. One was a bartender we've met along the way. Another was one of the author's cousins. Moehringer drove from Denver, where he was based as a correspondent for the Times, to New York to mourn and comfort old friends. He describes his cousin's mother, Charlene Byrne, as she grieved: "Charlene was crying, the kind of crying I could tell would last for years." And so it has, in Manhasset and so many other Long Island commuter towns. Moehringer's lovely evocation of an ordinary place filled with ordinary people gives dignity and meaning to those lost lives, and to his own. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

An engaging story of growing up in a turbulent time, with a loving hard working mother and several strong caring men of the local bar. Well written and honest, with heartfelt emotions associated with the young man's life experiences. Except for the epilogue, this could be any man's story of growing up, being influenced by the family and company of proud men. The child and young man without a father, in any community tavern, make a strong case for the character and strength of men, and a boy becoming a man. The story centers on a truly American bar and the cadre of folks that are regulars. The book also provides excellent insight on the roll of drinking and the implications associated with being a regular. This book feels very personal, and of the author's soul. Thank you JR.

His writing was fine, but the content was boring. JR had a difficult life growing up but he missed opportunities in his life. He fills this book with characters who are interesting enough but once you get to know them, he repeats their appeal throughout the book which is boring. The end is predictable but that was ok. Just too tedious to read.

The Tender Bar is a memoir of J. R. Moehringer's upbringing in a dysfunctional family. J.R.'s father

left his mother, refusing to take responsibility for his child. J.R. lives on and off with his mother at his grandparents' home in Manhasset, Long Island. His grandfather is erratic and strange, but he pays the bills. The mother is a model of determination and pulls herself and her son out of dependency. J.R. spends much of his childhood living at his grandparent's home in the summers and becomes friends with men at a local bar where his uncle serves drinks. His relationships with the men in the bar eventually provide him with the male companionship and mentoring that he so strongly desires. He receives a degree from Yale, only to fail to find a profession. He is aimless for several years trying to find himself, becoming involved with a woman who abandons him many times until he has had enough. How he evolves into an adult is the main theme of this book. The book is well written and the characters are realistic and intriguing.

If you've ever wondered why drinking in a public group is more enjoyable, or wondered where you felt safest growing up, or gave any thought at all to how you might have given yourself a clearer pathway to your future, J.R. Moehringer's *Memoir* will help. This wonderful book, bursting with the most honest, convivial view of tavern life since I read Pete Hamill, isn't just for fun, though. It carries an important message about belonging and about believing in whatever you need to in order to survive. Moehringer's "JR" is a lonely, disaffected kid who finds himself revealed most clearly, in the company of tavern-goers and barkeeps. His journey towards finding where he belongs, is in many ways, follows a universal roadmap. Most young men have been on that road. Having spent some time in similar circumstances, I agree with the writer that while the unique reasons that bring drinkers to a bar may identify them as individuals, it's the transformative nature of the society that enfolds them, barside, that's worthy of acknowledgement. Plus, if you're a Long Islander (I mean, from Brooklyn to Montauk) you know these guys really, really well. The writer has given us a sense of place that turns these small towns golden. For anyone who's raised a glass and leaned into a curved oak bar top, this reads like an old friend.

The writing and metaphors are exquisite: "While I fear that we're drawn to what abandons us, and to what seems most likely to abandon us, in the end I believe we're defined by what embraces us. I was drawn in the beginning and toward the end. As someone who for many years had a "Tender Bar" I know what it is like to receive love from misfits. I too am one of those. I also knew the coin would "flip" as alcohol is a strange bedfellow. It draws you in and leaves you hanging as everyone nurses their own crazy. But my problem was the middle of the book where he just went on and on with one more "oh let me tell you this cute story" about Uncle

Charlie, or "gee wasn't this philosophical of Bob the Cop." I got it and after awhile I found myself skipping through pages of antidotes after antidotes. I also found him playing stupid. He went to Yale and later Harvard and yet he plays down his intelligence. To be naive to the world was one thing, but stupid, no. And he tied way too neat a bow on why Sidney really left him, for, of course, a trust fund baby. Could it be, that she saw his love for the bar a sign of alcoholism? Or that she was superficial and wanted to marry someone with money like she had? Nah I didn't buy his love of Publicans was the bow he wanted it to be. All in all, it is wonderfully written, but just too stuffed with filler in the middle.

I don't have an interest in bars or drinking, nor for that matter, am I a guy, so on the surface, this would not have been a book for me. However, JR has crafted a beautiful, sentimental and comedic memoir cleverly hitting metaphors that deliver tears and laughter and paint many portraits through time.

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