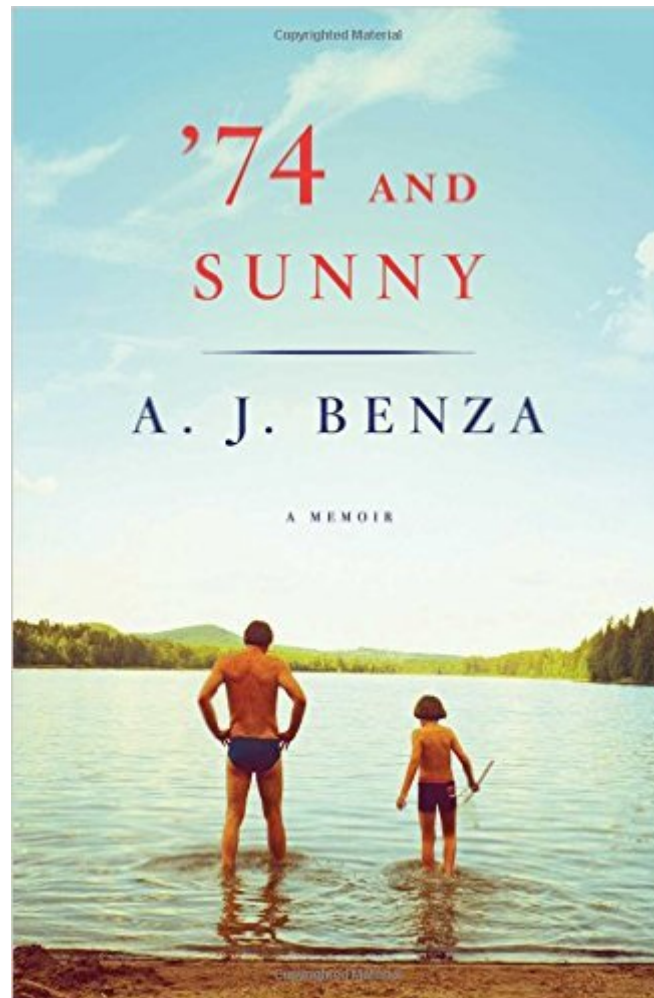


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# '74 And Sunny



## Synopsis

A surprisingly tender coming-of-age story of a close-knit yet tough Sicilian-American family that accepts and welcomes a young boy struggling to understand himself by the former Daily News (New York) gossip columnist and E! television host. A.J. Benza's distinctive blend of wit, dry humor, and genuine tenderness shines through this candid, compelling memoir about the summer of 1974 when his shy, effeminate cousin comes to live with A.J.'s family, which is dominated by his short-tempered, outspoken, hyper-masculine father. At its core, A.J.'s story is about learning that being exactly who you were meant to be is the only thing that matters. Through anecdotes of fishing with his father, playing tackle football, and conquering neighborhood bullies, he tells a story of triumph and acceptance, of a loving but rough around the edges family that puts aside its prejudices to welcome with open arms a young boy struggling to understand his sexuality and ultimately accept himself. In a sometimes raw and always endearing voice, 74 and Sunny is a revelatory account of a life-defining summer on Long Island, when tolerance wins over ignorance, family neutralizes fear, and love triumphs over all. For anyone who's navigated the choppy seas of adolescence, this story about redefining what it means to be a man, and learning to accept those whom we might fail to understand will surely resonate.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is one of the most powerful coming of age stories I have ever read. It will make you laugh and cry, and touch your heart. It is the story of a father (Al Benza) and his son (A.J., age 12) who take under their wing for the summer Gino (age 10), the son of Al's brother, Larry. Larry wants them to fix

his son because he is "brain-damaged" (i.e. gay). Al is a tough Italian father who takes in Gino to help out family. Al and his family are a tough bunch, but love of family is paramount, and Al, A.J., and their family demonstrate the importance of accepting people for who they are. As tough as Al was, he was also remarkably compassionate, and very demonstrative in showing affection to his son and nephew. He provided a perfect example of what unconditional love truly is. The stories are so memorable that you will want to read them again and again. The story about "queer" being written on the sidewalk in front of the house, and Al's response, is shocking and yet makes you cheer. At one point, Al and his son have a conversation about Gino. Al tells his son that he was pretty sure Gino was going to stay the way he was "because he doesn't have a choice." Al went on to say that he wanted Gino to feel "it's okay for him to be who he is whenever he's around family." Wow! From a tough Italian father (who sold carpets and linoleum) in 1974! Al, who was a workaholic, often came home early that summer. When his wife asked why, he said "Can't I do something with my son and nephew?" Al and A.J. and the rest of the family showed Gino unconditional love, accepting Gino's quirks, even celebrating them. The stories are absolutely priceless.

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