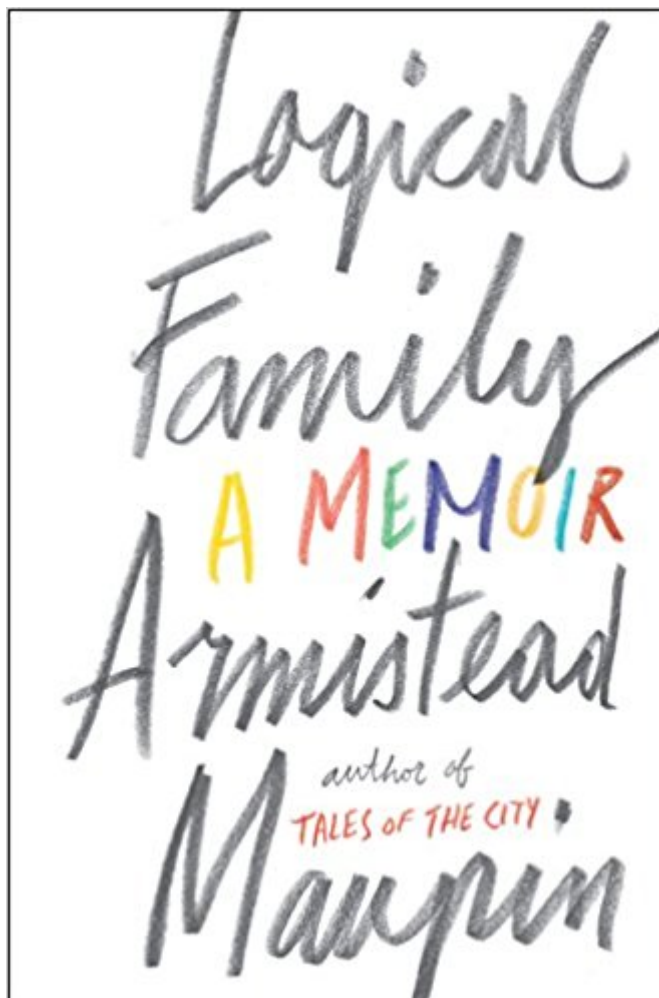


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# Logical Family: A Memoir



## Synopsis

"A book for any of us, gay or straight, who have had to find our family. Maupin is one of America's finest storytellers, and the story of his life is a story as fascinating, as delightful and as compulsive as any of the tales he has made up for us." •Neil Gaiman "I fell in love with Maupin's effervescent Tales of the City decades ago, and his genius turn at memoir is no less compelling. Logical Family is a must read." •Mary Karr In this long-awaited memoir, the beloved author of the bestselling Tales of the City series chronicles his odyssey from the old South to freewheeling San Francisco, and his evolution from curious youth to ground-breaking writer and gay rights pioneer. Born in the mid-twentieth century and raised in the heart of conservative North Carolina, Armistead Maupin lost his virginity to another man "on the very spot where the first shots of the Civil War were fired." Realizing that the South was too small for him, this son of a traditional lawyer packed his earthly belongings into his Opel GT (including a beloved portrait of a Confederate ancestor), and took to the road in search of adventure. It was a journey that would lead him from a homoerotic Navy initiation ceremony in the jungles of Vietnam to that strangest of strange lands: San Francisco in the early 1970s. Reflecting on the profound impact those closest to him have had on his life, Maupin shares his candid search for his "logical family," the people he could call his own. "Sooner or later, we have to venture beyond our biological family to find our logical one, the one that actually makes sense for us," he writes. "We have to, if we are to live without squandering our lives." From his loving relationship with his palm-reading Grannie who insisted Maupin was the reincarnation of her artistic bachelor cousin, Curtis, to an awkward conversation about girls with President Richard Nixon in the Oval Office, Maupin tells of the extraordinary individuals and situations that shaped him into one of the most influential writers of the last century. Maupin recalls his losses and life-changing experiences with humor and unflinching honesty, and brings to life flesh-and-blood characters as endearing and unforgettable as the vivid, fraught men and women who populate his enchanting novels. What emerges is an illuminating portrait of the man who depicted the liberation and evolution of America's queer community over the last four decades with honesty and compassion—and inspired millions to claim their own lives. Logical Family includes black-and-white photographs.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“A book for any of us, gay or straight, who have had to find our family. Maupin is one of America’s finest storytellers, and the story of his life is a story as fascinating, as delightful and as compulsive as any of the tales he has made up for us.” (Neil Gaiman) “Engrossing and emotional.” The story is told with such clarity that even those unfamiliar with Maupin’s work can appreciate his life experiences. The true prize here is the cleverness with which Maupin bares his soul. Maupin ties the bonds of joy and heartache he shares with both his families (biological and “ecological”), and in so doing he has crafted a nuanced reflection on what it means to love and be loved in a flawed but beautiful world.” (Publishers Weekly, starred review) “I fell in love with Maupin’s effervescent Tales of the City decades ago, and his genius turn at memoir is no less compelling. Logical Family is a must read.” (Mary Karr) “There could be no more appropriate title for Maupin’s own tale, which relates his coming of age from a rigidly conservative Southern childhood to one of the most notable writers of the 20th century. Maupin writes vibrantly. With just the right amounts of humor, thoughtfulness, and poignancy.” (Library Journal (starred review)) “Master storyteller Armistead Maupin – the man who defined the difference between “œa biological family” and “œa logical family,” who is both gifted with fearless art and the ability to speak for millions – finally tells his own story. Logical Family is a sweet, filthy peach of a memoir from a cultural explosion of a man.” (Caitlin Moran) “It is easy to understand Maupin’s reputation for geniality, given his openheartedness as a person and his honesty as a writer; and that will make this delightful chronicle attractive to a wide range of readers, whether they’re familiar with his fiction or not.” (Booklist) “Logical Family is a beautiful memoir – so tender and funny and dignified and kind that it left me a little

weeepy. (Alan Cumming) “An enormously talented writer witty but always sympathetic, generous in showing us the secrets of his heart.... By writing about what’s seemingly different Armistead Maupin always manages to capture what’s so hilariously painfully true for all of us. (Amy Tan, author of *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Valley of Amazement*) “Maupin deftly illustrates how far America and the pioneering Anna have come, and nearly 40 years into the [Tales of the City] series, his writing remains wildly addictive but is deeper and richer. (People) “Together, the nine volumes of Tales constitute a cultural touchstone that has enlarged our understanding of the varieties of human behavior. |. Tales of the City remains an immensely readable accomplishment that wears its significance lightly. (Washington Post) “A consummate entertainer who has made a generation laugh... It is Maupin’s Dickensian gift to be able to render love convincingly. (Edmund White, *Times Literary Supplement*)

Armistead Maupin is the author of the nine-volume *Tales of the City* series, which includes *Tales of the City*, *More Tales of the City*, *Further Tales of the City*, *Babycakes*, *Significant Others*, *Sure of You*, *Michael Tolliver Lives*, *Mary Ann in Autumn*, and now *The Days of Anna Madrigal*.

Maupin’s other novels include *Maybe the Moon* and *The Night Listener*. Maupin was the 2012 recipient of the Lambda Literary Foundation’s Pioneer Award. He lives in San Francisco with his husband, the photographer Christopher Turner.

When reviewing a previous book by Armistead Maupin (*The Days of Anna Madrigal* is the finale of his *Tales of the City* series) which I did in November of 2013, I commented that I had not in fact read these earlier works, despite the fact that they’d been in our library. Since I am always an enthusiastic reader of memoirs, though, and since by now I’m thoroughly familiar with Maupin’s work, it was a delight to be offered his memoir *Logical Family*. There are many charming and enlightening aspects of this excellent and honest exploration of the personality and development of the author himself, who can certainly be counted, without any equivocation, as one of the most important voices speaking for the LGBTQ community in the present era. Having now reached the eminence of “elder statesman”, his wit, compassion, and deep insight are to be valued and cherished. Although my own involvement in the LGBTQ community spans much the

same time-frame as his, from 1974 to the present, my experience has had a very different focus. This may explain why, although my gay spouse did in fact read *Tales of the City* in the 1980s, I focused more specifically on writing relating to spiritual and religious matters, like those of Troy Perry, Chris Glaser, and John J. McNeill. I was not unaware, however, of many of the aspects Maupin discusses, and am grateful to have my insights enriched by his sharing. Especially meaningful in this book is the inclusion of "Michael's Letter to Mama" which since its first publication at the time of Anita Bryant's vicious anti-gay crusade has become the classic "Coming Out" song. Set to music at the time of the film adaptation of *Tales of the City*, it is now a staple of the performances of Gay Men's Choirs (and of course can be accessed on YouTube). In any event, not only did I love this book; I am absolutely certain that not only the numerous fans of *Tales of the City*, but also those newly come to an awareness of Armistead Maupin's stellar importance as a chronicler of one aspect of LGBTQ life in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, will find it a powerful addition to their libraries.

Armistead Maupin, that gay southern boy with the very good manners, is the author of the "Tales of the City" series, as well as couple of standalone novels. In this memoir, "Logical Family", Maupin recounts his "families" - both birth and acquired - with beautiful writing and almost sublime graciousness. He's cautious in what he should reveal...and what not to. And, believe me, that ability can make or break a memoir. "Logical Family" is the selected memories of a lifetime. He writes about his parents and two siblings and how he was raised in Raleigh, NC, the son of a lawyer and a...lady. He adored his mother and respected his father. Coming out to them was done over a lifetime - and in one very famous piece, written as "Michael Tolliver" - though Maupin thinks his mother always knew he was gay. But we don't talk about such things in prominent, conservative Republican families, whose grandparents and great grandparents on one side, fought for the South in the Civil War. On the other, he was a descendant of wealthy Brits who had emigrated to the United States in the early 20th century. However, as Maupin investigates, much of the story - like all family stories - is not quite as it was portrayed in family lore. Maupin also writes about his family of friends and lovers. He's candid about the people who have meant a lot to him in his life. One of things I enjoyed most about the book is Maupin's on-going recounting on his change from conservative-in-the-closet to liberal out-man. His life is both a personal and political journey, recounted beautifully in "Logical Family".

When I immigrated to the San Francisco area as a student, the internet was not yet a thing and people still read actual paper newspapers, like the San Francisco Chronicle. There were two journalists that, for me, embodied the rich and multi-layered culture of the much-storied city by the bay, and one of them was Armistead Maupin. For many years I assumed the name was a nom de plume, which it isn't, and that he'd lived in San Francisco forever, which he hadn't. I started Logical Family expecting to read a lot about San Francisco, but Armistead doesn't arrive there until halfway through the book. Logical Family is the story of not one but several families: the author's quirky family of origin, the friends who become his family, and the larger family of the gay community. In that regard, it's a fine companion piece to Tales of the City, as various family members served as inspiration for some of the serial's characters, and no doubt will inspire many to read (or reread) all nine novels. The memoir meanders, as autobiographies are wont to do, and I most enjoyed his depiction of his sweet mother, the description of his stint in Vietnam, and his recollections of the 1970s and 80s in San Francisco, including the rampant homophobia of the era and the devastation of AIDS. Then there's the story about the random events that led to Tales, buried in the middle of a chapter. "Most of us don't know when our Moment comes...It's just a passing whim, or a phone call or a snippet of conversation that leads to one thing and another and you end up with a life you would never have had at all had it not been for that first thing." Turns out that his career was launched with a story based on the infamous Marina Safeway, renowned as a grocery where you could pick up some frozen orange juice and maybe a date too. For me, most of the book was hovering around five stars, but I lost interest somewhere around the last 20%. I guess I was expecting to hear more about the serial, and how that evolved, and the books that continued to emerge for decades. Or about his take on the cultural and political shifts in the city. Instead, the writing started to feel a little too name-droppy for my taste, with too many anecdotes about his encounters with famous people. Others may not mind but to me it was offputting, and I zipped through those sections, preferring the poignant farewells to his mother and then to the Madwoman, her mother. The Afterword is Maupin's Letter to Mama, written in response to Anita Bryant's anti-gay vendetta, first read aloud at a fundraiser. It became his signature piece: "nothing I've ever written has had such an impact." The letter serves as an affecting conclusion to one writer's story about finding his place in the world.

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