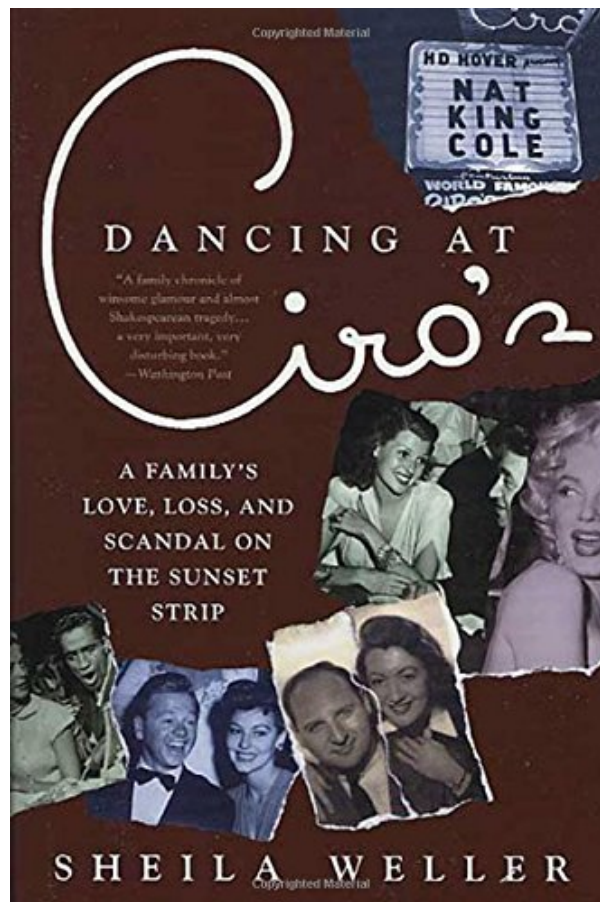
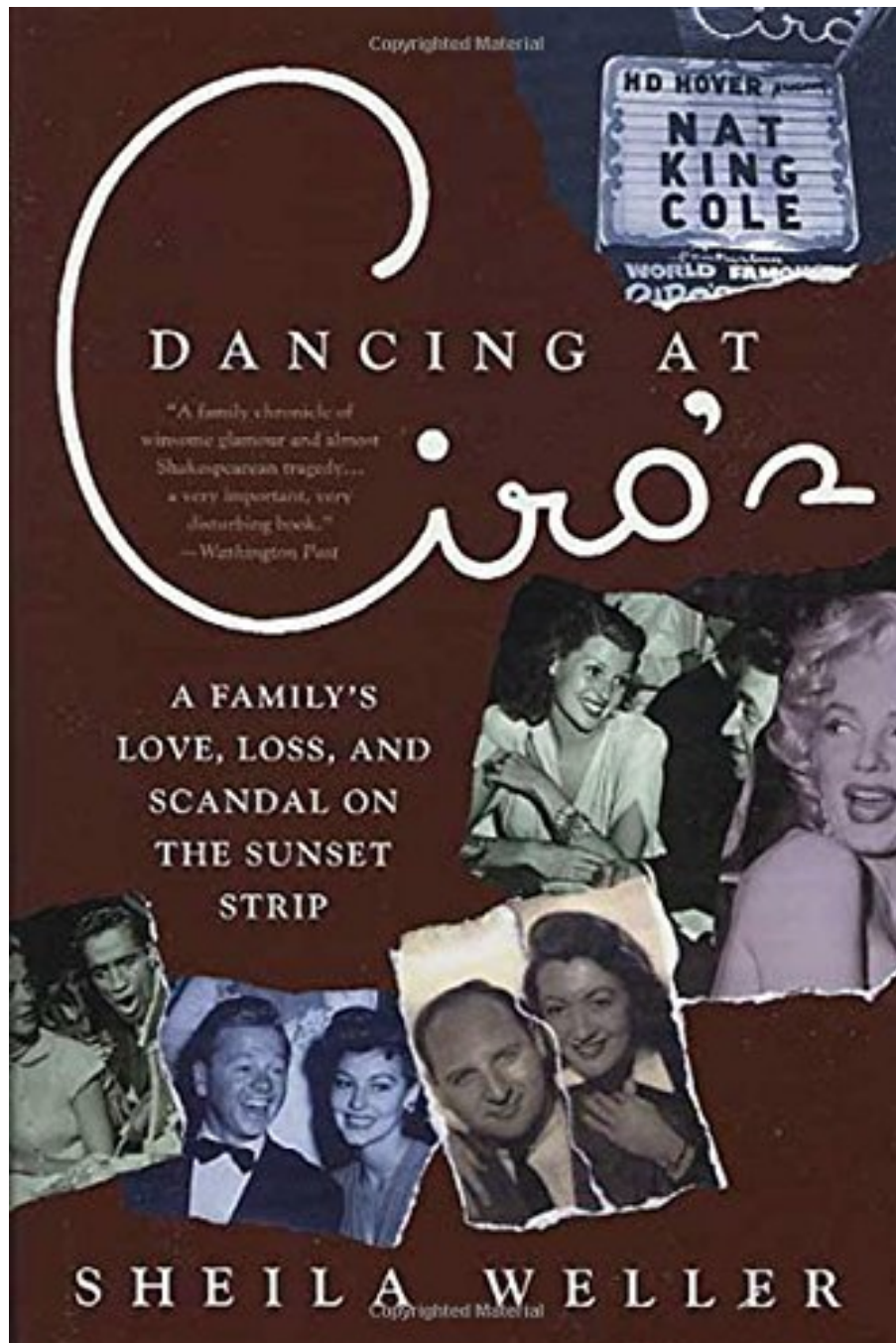


# DANCING AT CIRO'S: A FAMILY'S LOVE, LOSS, AND SCANDAL ON THE SUNSET STRIP BY SHEILA WELLER



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Veteran journalist Sheila Weller's childhood memoir is as starkly compelling as it is emotionally and historically complex, lifting the veil on a life of rarified privilege. Weller's father was a pioneering Los Angeles neurosurgeon, her mother the acclaimed Hollywood gossip columnist Helen Hover, and uncle Herman Hover owned Tinseltown's most famous nightspot, Ciro's. Nonetheless, Weller reveals a childhood haunted by dysfunction and denial, a hidden familial drama played out in the idyllic village that was Beverly Hills in the '40s and '50s, and one that segues to dark tragedy as it wends inexorably toward a final act scarred by scandal and life-shattering violence. Weller's richly detailed, emphatic prose skillfully interweaves ruminations on the phenomenon of American Jewish reinvention that drove her family of overachievers, with observations on the Old Hollywood movers and shakers who were her neighbors, friends, and casual acquaintances--reminiscences that are all the more poignant filtered through the wondrous eyes of a child. No mere star-studded autobiography, Weller's work here is framed by an almost palpable sense of personal exorcism and, crucially, a quest for ultimate familial redemption. It's an enlightening personal journey, one whose troubling tales of domestic disconnection may seem all-too-empathetic to many, yet one that ultimately finds a place of warm, if bittersweet, understanding. --Jerry McCulley

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that generation of her family died. While Weller claims to have written this as a love letter to her family, she doesn't succeed in making readers feel their story is exceptional or representative enough to merit telling. A few images, like the Hover family heading west, are iconic. It's also entertaining to learn the intricacies of Ciro's design and tidbits about stars like Sammy Davis Jr. But when Weller concludes that sometimes "empathy and epiphany is not in the cards," readers may be left wondering why Weller bothered to tell the story. Despite the meticulous research and American themes, Weller's memoir doesn't enliven her family or enlighten her readers.

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In 1958, young Sheila Weller was living a charmed life with her family in Beverly Hills. Her father was a brilliant brain surgeon. Her mother was a movie-magazine writer whose brother owned Hollywood's most dazzling nightclub, *Ciro's*. Then her world exploded after she witnessed her uncle's brutal attempt to kill her father.

Weller has written a deeply felt memoir of her family's life contrasted with those most glamorous days of Hollywood's forties and fifties. While vividly describing Lana Turner's, Frank Sinatra's, and Sammy Davis Jr.'s evenings--and breakdowns--at *Ciro's*, Weller casts a keen eye on her own family's turmoil and loss.

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- 352 pages

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This chronicle of glamour, rage, sorrow and despair makes a substantial contribution to American social history. A very important book. -- Book Review, Washington Post, February 21, 2003

#### Most helpful customer reviews

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

A very good read

By M.A. De Neve

I just finished reading *Dancing at Ciro's* by Sheila Weller. The author's uncle ran a nightclub in L.A. that was a hangout for all the top movie stars of that day. Lana Turner, Marilyn Monroe, Clark Gable and Judy Garland all spent their evenings in Ciro's night club.

Weller's mother wrote for movie magazines of the day and her father was a surgeon. It seemed like an ideal life, but there were cracks in the foundation and Weller's world fell apart when her dad started dating his sister-in-law. Her dad left her mother and indeed the whole family. Weller's rich life style evaporated as she faced the pain of a broken family.

While I am not the child of divorce, I did grow up in the 1950's so this was in many ways a story about the world where I grew up. Sometimes Weller's memories brought back good and bad memories of my own.

9 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

A wonderful surprise!

By A Customer

When I ordered this book I thought I was buying an exposé about life at Ciro's in its heyday, with emphasis on celebrities. Light summer reading, you know.. But this book is not about that and I could not have been more surprised or pleased. Sheila Weller's experiences as an adolescent trying to fit in with the Popular Girls rings so true that I felt like I was in Junior High again, only with her. The painful stories she relates about her family, especially about her father, made me think she must be a wonderfully strong woman to be able to write with such honesty. And with a wry sense of humor threaded throughout, even in the painful parts of her story. I highly recommend this book and look forward to more from this author.

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Fascinating

By A Customer

Sheila Weller has told the story of her family lovingly and without self-pity. Although she describes many supremely painful moments - her rejection by her father is foremost - I never had the feeling she was wallowing in the past. She did her homework and the history of her parents and grandparents was more interesting than descriptions of the celebrities who visited Ciro's. We hear enough about celebrities these days. Weller maintains good tension throughout the book. Once I began reading I didn't want to put it down.

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