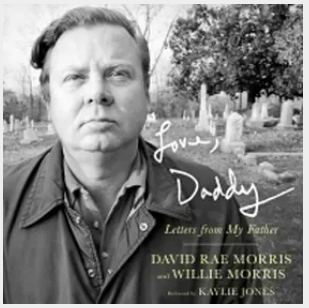
University Press of Mississippi

Love, Daddy

Letters from My Father

Love, Daddy: Letters from My Father examines the complexities of father-and-son relationships through letters and photographs. Willie Morris wrote scores of letters to his only son, David Rae Morris, from the mid-1970s until Willie's death in 1999. From David Rae's perspective, his father was often emotionally disconnected and lived a peculiar lifestyle, often staying out carousing well into the night. But Willie Morris was an eloquent and accomplished writer and began to write his son long, loving, and supportive letters when David Rae was still in high school. An aspiring photographer, David Rae was confused and befuddled by his father's warring personalities and began photographing Willie using the camera as a buffer to protect him and his emotions. The collection begins in early 1976 and continues for more than twenty years as David Rae moved about the country, living in New York, Massachusetts, Texas, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Minnesota, before finally settling in Louisiana. "All the while my father was writing to me I somehow managed to save his letters," David Rae wrote. "I left them in storage and in boxes and in piles of clutter on desks and in basements. They were kind, offering a love that he found difficult to express openly and directly. He simply was more comfortable communicating through letters." The letters cover topics ranging from writing, the weather, Willie's return to Mississippi in 1980, the Ole Miss football season, and local town gossip to the fleas on the dog to just life and how it's lived. Likewise, the photographs are portraits, documentary images of daily life, dinners, outings, and private moments. Together they narrate and illuminate the complexities of one family relationship, and how, for better or worse, that love endures the passage of time.



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