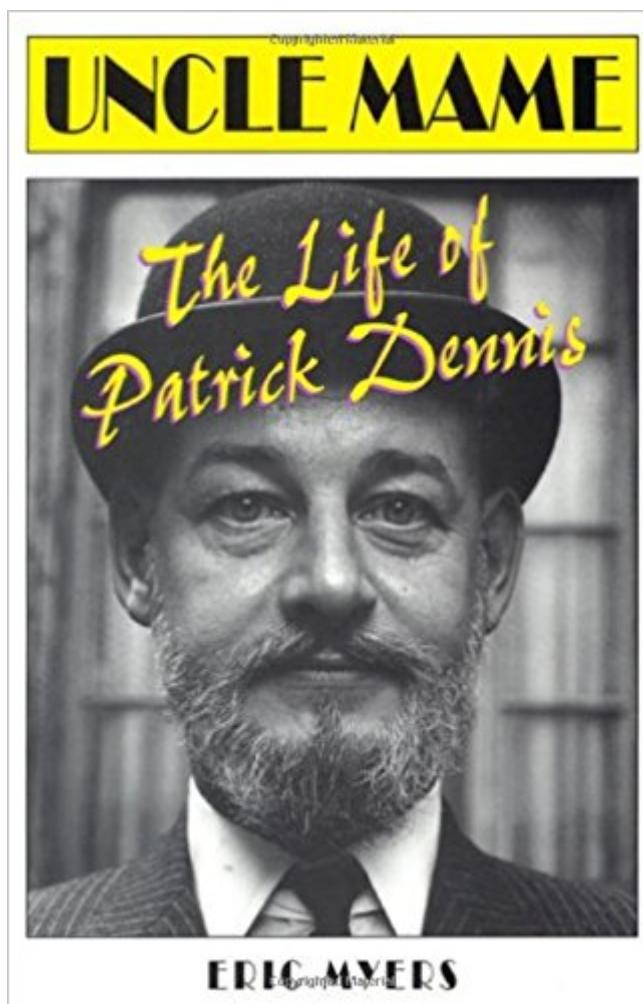


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# Uncle Mame: The Life Of Patrick Dennis



## Synopsis

Edward Everett Tanner III, under his pseudonyms of Patrick Dennis and Virginia Rowans, was the author of sixteen novels - most of them bestsellers - including the classics *Little Me* and *Genius*. But, despite the success of his other works, he is best known and best remembered for his most indelible creation - *Auntie Mame*. Born and raised in the affluent suburbs of Chicago, Tanner moved to New York City after World War II and embarked upon a writing career. His first two books were published with a whimper - attracting few reviews and fewer sales - and his third book was rejected by nineteen publishers before being accepted at a relatively small house. But *Auntie Mame* became a phenomena spending two years on the bestseller lists, adapting into a successful play, movie, and later a musical. As a result of this and later successes, Tanner made millions and became the toast of a certain bohemian segment of Manhattan arts society. He also spent every cent he ever made. Torn between his wife and family and his own awakening realization of his homosexuality, he separated from his wife and moved to Mexico. By the early 70's, his writing career over, he embarked upon a new career - as a butler to some of the wealthiest families in America. Based on extensive interviews with co-workers, friends, and relatives, *Uncle Mame* is a revealing, appealing portrait of a great American character. Easily the counterpart of such revered wits as P. G. Wodehouse and Evelyn Waugh, Dennis is not only the man who brought camp to the American mainstream but he also lived a life as wild, poignant, madcap, and intriguing as any of his own books.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If Dennis is remembered at all today, it is as the author of *Auntie Mame*. But in the late 1950s and early '60s, Edward Everett Tanner III (who published under the pseudonyms Patrick Dennis and Virginia Rowans) was a phenomenally popular novelist. Myers's literate, impeccably researched and entertaining biography resurrects this outrageous author of social satires who almost singlehandedly introduced "camp" into mainstream American culture. In 1955, Tanner wrote several short stories about an irreverent, fabulous woman that were turned down by 19 publishers until an editor at Vanguard Press suggested he turn them into a novel. *Auntie Mame* made Tanner a millionaire (during the novel's 112-week stint on the New York Times bestseller list, he became the first author to have three books on the Times list at once, when he published *Guestward Ho!* and *The Loving Couple* in 1956). Tanner was at his career peak in late 1962, when his *Little Me* opened on Broadway. But a week after he was profiled in *Life*, he attempted suicide and was committed to a mental hospital for eight months. After years of leading a double life as a gay man while married with two kids, he had fallen in love with another man and decided he had to leave his family. By the early '70s, his novels were out of fashion and he had spent (or drunk) most of the money he had made. He later reentered the milieu he'd previously enjoyed by becoming a butler to the rich and famous (including McDonald's founder Ray Kroc). The name Patrick Dennis has faded from most readers' memories, but that of *Auntie Mame* lives on (1998's *But Darling, I'm Your Auntie Mame* tracked her incarnations from book to stage to screen). So the reference to *Mame* in the title, along with the fetching "Playbill"-style book jacket, should compensate for Dennis's current obscurity, and help draw theater fans to this well-told tale. (Nov.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"Raises a glass to Patrick Dennis, the divine social satirist who introduced America to *Auntie Mame*." -- *Vanity Fair*  
"The book you have to read." -- *Entertainment Weekly* -- This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Anyone who loved the book and the movie entitled "*Auntie Mame*" may wish to read this book. It explains the brilliance of its author and develops for the reader a respect (in many ways) for him and to discover for himself, evidently painfully, who he was. He had a rough time. Only someone with so much empathy and identity with the female brain could have had such understanding and splendid wit. Another book you might want to look for is "*The Moon's a Balloon*," written by David Niven. He did not have an identity problem but what a shock to learn about his schooling and how wonderful also about his wit. Back to *Uncle Mame*. The author did a great job and this book is timeless, and

while totally fiction, placed in a time in America that actually occurred. When Patrick Dennis wrote his book, attitudes were very different and people were not aware of identity problems. The only people who noticed were those who had perhaps a problem personally. We have come such a very long way. My thoughts are that nobody....nobody should judge someone else and look down on a person who leads a decent life no matter what that personal lifestyle. If that person can love someone and be loved back, what greater joy in this life. What is the worst thing for a human being? Loneliness. nancy morse

After reading Eric Myers' "Uncle Mame: The Life of Patrick Dennis" I felt an overpowering sense of sadness. The last thing I suspected was that the life of the creator of the classic "Auntie Mame" and "Little Me" was anything but a banquet...Eric Myers has done a tremendous job of researching Mr. Dennis' life to the last detail--and that is the problem. No fault of Mr. Myers that Patrick Dennis (whose real last name was Tanner), was a complex, irrational, volatile and mostly depressed individual. That Mr Dennis had the ability to write such delightful farcical stories is a paradox; but it was also part of who he was. If only the Auntie Mame persona had overtaken the darker and menacing Mr Hyde that lurked inside of Mr Dennis' brain, then everything would have been much better. Not to give anything away, I highly recommend this book to anyone who's ever wondered about the creator of the wonderful characters that we all know and love today--Patrick Dennis was Auntie Mame; or was it the other way around? Read the book and you'll find out!

This could not have been an easy book to write. A simple mind, without nuance or heart, could very easily dismiss the author of "Auntie Mame" and other comedic classics as a neurotic, alcoholic mess. Eric Myers doesn't rip apart Patrick Dennis with his bloody hands -- but he doesn't hero-worship away uncomfortable or messy of his subject's life, either; he has an honest, educated appreciation of Patrick Dennis' work (under all his various noms-de-plumes) and wants to know from whence it sprang. And the answer? Life and lives are messy, and people make mistakes--sometimes the same ones, over and over--and that's exactly the way it should be. That's a wonderful, reassuring message to get, and thank gawd a'mitey there's an Eric Myers to deliver it.

Answers all the questions about "Pat Tanner" I've had all these years and where his ideas came from but it's still a mystery where his great wit came from. We now know who all his characters were: himself, which I always suspected. What a great one-of-a-kind writer! I would have loved to have met him. His wife also seems like she was a kick, and we know about his friends -- shown in in

all their glory in "Little Me". I wish I could find some of his less-known books.

If you are a Patrick Dennis fan, you will really enjoy this biography of a fascinating, "over the top" writer. A fun read and it gives interesting insight to his writings as well as his complicated personality. I first read "Auntie Mame" when I was in high school and loved it. I am glad I have a copy of "Little Me" which is so clever and so much fun but perhaps out of print. A small point - but I wish the book title was different as I think it a bit belittling. He went way beyond Mame, despite being tied to his most famous character. As you read the biography you find he was not an 'Uncle" figure in his relationships. For Patrick Dennis fans, this book is a real treat and I loved every minute of it. Enjoy.

If you love Auntie Mame you will love Uncle Mame. A crazy, wild life. What a great movie or Broadway musical this bio would make

What a life!! Mr. Edward Everett Tanner (a.k.a. "Pat"...Patrick Dennis...Virginia Rowans) did EVERYthing, wasn't afraid of ANYthing. From the experiences of his deep and lifelong commitment to friends, to wife and children, sprang all of the side-splitting laughter he has left us---"Auntie Mame", though definitely his chef-d'ouvre, is nonetheless only a small part of the body of his extensive work. Too bad it took him the better part of his life to come out to himself---maybe it would have made a difference in his literary output, since so much of his comedy was tied to then-clandestine camp. But who knows or cares? Any man who can find humor even in the penury of his last years is a creative genius on any level. You'll laugh often, and out loud, and get some great lines for cocktail conversation!!

The book is well-reviewed and I'll only say that I couldn't put it down and really loved it. Beyond that, I have to make a plea to the universe: Whoever is holding the rights to Pat's books, for heaven's sakes get them out in ebook format asap. The glory of ebooks is that now we can all explore the backlists of historic authors. The popularity of this biography should be sparking a major revival.

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