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Normal's Just a Cycle on a Washing Machine: A Memoir

Len Bourland

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Len Bourland : Normal's Just a Cycle on a Washing Machine: A Memoir before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Normal's Just a Cycle on a Washing Machine: A Memoir:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. University Park OdysseyBy Virginia AlanisLen Bourland is an award winning columnist thanks to her keen social perception and her understanding of marriage and family. NORMALS JUST A CYCLE ON A WASHING MACHINE vividly portrays family life during the 1980s to 2000s at University Park, in the heart of Dallas. Len Bourland focuses on her striving upper middle class family. The memoir

explores the strength and resilience of the human spirit in the face of betrayal. Len was forced out of her marriage by the man who was her college sweetheart, husband of twenty-three years, and father of their three children. *NORMALS JUST A CYCLE ON A WASHING MACHINE* serves as a time capsule as Len goes on an odyssey in search of peace, happiness, and prosperity. At the heart of *NORMALS JUST A CYCLE ON A WASHING MACHINE* is change, we watch the family cope as they are forced to change their lifestyle, their home, and their dreams. Although heartbroken, Len copes with the great changes in her life by protecting her children and beginning a new career in real estate which gives her hope and allows her to survive and even thrive. *NORMALS JUST A CYCLE ON A WASHING MACHINE* is a memoir about family, marriage, betrayal, gender, and wealth. Although the subject matter is at times difficult, Len's hopeful tone and her strength and spirit, along with her journalistic writing style never lets her memoir sink into depressing territory. Len is too resilient for that. Len is too bubbly and positive for that. She reminds me of the writer Nora Ephron. If you love Nora's work you will love Len Bourland. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. quick fun read, will resonate with moms especially. By Customer I thoroughly enjoyed this book. My favorite parts were the columns the author included from the 80s and 90s. I loved hearing her perspective on the challenges of raising grounded children in a consumer society, and the anecdotes she shares about being a mom with a busy growing family. Her book reads like a modern day love letter to her children and her grandchildren, and her reflections on life resonate well. Quick read, fun way to reminisce about our own families and childhoods. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This book is a great read. By Joy This book is a great read...especially if you've been there, done that. Poignant, funny and better than therapy! The more I think about the title of the book, the more I have to agree. I'm passing it on to some girlfriends.

Award winning local humor columnist, Len Bourland was a writer/doctor's wife detailing a normal life of carpooling and raising her three young children in the halcyon 80s in a Dallas suburb known as "The Bubble." As she entered her forties, her bubble burst, and she went from a stay-at-home surgeon's wife to a single working mother hustling to make money, while raising adolescents who begin dating...and so does she. Using excerpts from her columns over the years, she invites readers to sort through their laundry with hers as both her life and society cycle through change very rapidly, although there is always "Wash, Spin, Repeat" in this rollicking memoir. Part One: Pre-Soak introduces the family, the dog, the neighborhood and priceless anecdotes about adjusting to the upscale neighborhood of Highland Park. As the writer/mother gets noticed by the Texas Press Association and is given her own by-line she grows her audience with funny perspectives on life in the big city in Part Two: Normal. Even as she is broadcasting on NPR and her life is "busy, fun, exciting" it is also on a countdown mode. Abruptly her surgeon husband has a mid-life crisis. In Part Three: Spin, columns on divorce, depression and trying to stabilize her children going through adolescence are poignantly told with feminist undertones. Lamenting to a friend that she just wants her life to go back to being "normal," she's advised "Honey, don't go looking for normal, normal's just a cycle on a washing machine," hence the title of the book. Part Four: Second Cycle spans two decades of learning a career, emptying her nest, and hilariously, having romances alongside her children. The backdrop of all of these stages of her family is the emergence of technology, consumerism, terrorism, and aging alluded to with wit and perspective. A chaotic second marriage is tersely described in staccato one liners that are as brief as the marriage in Part Five: Turbo Spin. It segues nicely to the charming conclusion in Part Six: Gentle Wash about becoming a grandmother. As a memoir, it reads like a narrative that will bring smiles as well as the occasional tear with much to inspire readers of all ages. With resilience, the author learns to make peace not only with all those hurts along the way, but also with herself in the process. As a self-professed child of the international corporate move, she is known to many throughout the Southeast and Southwest. She often broadcast her columns on KERA national public radio while writing her feature column. This is her first book described by movie producer Judy Burch Gass, "We finally have a book to remind us how funny and remarkable life can be in spite of its challenges. Read it on the plane, give it to a friend, or take it to the beach." Anyone who came of age in the last century or is raising a family now will find this a book to love.

Kirkus A housewife and mother in a Dallas suburb chronicles various changes in her life in this compilation of humor pieces. Bourland, a Dallas-based writer and NPR broadcaster who mines humor and wit from the ups and downs of everyday living, offers a collection of her essays and columns in this debut. She divides the book into different laundry-themed sections, and in the first part, "Pre-Soak," she introduces her surgeon husband, her two sons and daughter, and the family dog. In the second, "Normal," readers will settle into her household's routine and laugh at observations such as, "There is some sort of cosmic joke that at the exact point at which communication with a teen is at its lowest, the states decree you can sit in a vehicle in a city with horrendous traffic and 'teach' your kid to drive." However, by the third section, "Spin Cycle," Bourland writes that her husband had an affair that results in divorce, and she must reinvent herself, her family, and her column as a single woman in midlife. In "Second Cycle," she writes movingly about keeping her family together and developing a career of her own for the first time as well as about dating again--right as her kids are starting to date for the first time. By the end of the book, she's settled comfortably into the role of a grandmother. Overall, the author does an excellent job of grounding her material in real-life events. For example, as

she and her children grow in different ways, she alludes to events such as the Gulf War, President Bill Clinton's sex scandal, and 9/11, which all shape their perspectives. There are times when the memoir seems a bit quiet, especially in comparison to others that touch on more dramatic subjects, such as alcoholism or abuse. But as Bourland perseveres through hardships and maintains her sense of humor throughout these essays, she remains emotionally accessible to readers, who may recognize themselves in her. In the end, the "ordinary" nature of the author's story is its greatest asset. A memoiristic collection that shines with quiet strength.