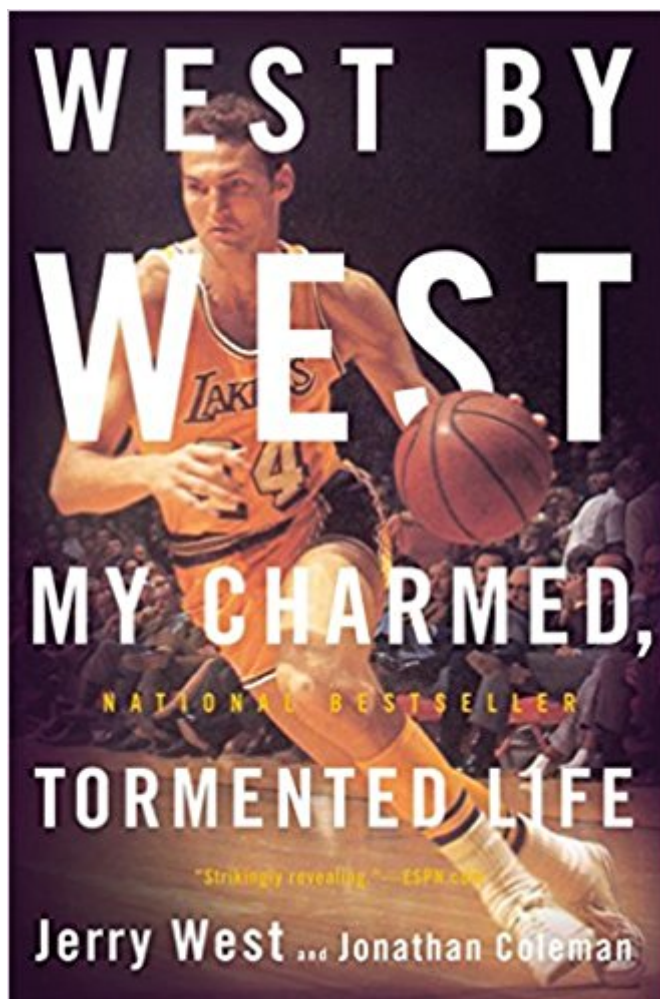


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# West By West: My Charmed, Tormented Life



## Synopsis

Jerry West is one of the most revered and enigmatic sports icons of all time, but beneath the surface lies a complicated man who shares his true story with unflinching candor. **WEST BY WEST** recounts West's difficult journey from an abusive childhood in West Virginia (and the loss of a beloved brother to war) to his All-American success at West Virginia University, and his brilliant 40-year career with the Los Angeles Lakers. He speaks openly for the first time about his lifelong battle with depression, low self-esteem, and his complex relationships with NBA legends Elgin Baylor, Bill Russell, Wilt Chamberlain, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Pat Riley, Shaquille O'Neal, and Kobe Bryant, with owners Jack Kent Cooke and Jerry Buss, coach Phil Jackson, and many more. Unsparing in its self-assessment, **WEST BY WEST** is a profound confession and a magnificent inspiration, a book that generated much discussion when it was published last year and is sure to be talked about for years to come.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Anyone who follows basketball knows that Jerry West was a supreme athlete and a brilliant general manager. What I did not know until reading this powerful book was just how complex he is. **West by West** is a rounded, honest and moving exploration not just of West's life under the arena spotlights, but his passages through his darkest hours. With remarkable clarity and courage, West explores his flaws and ghosts, his glory on the court and his struggles off. Paralyzed and haunted by his childhood, this was a superstar who, at the top of his game, could not escape the feeling that he belonged at the bottom. Few would have the courage to look so deeply into the mirror, but in this

exceptional book, West has done so." — Gay Talese, author of *A Writer's Life* "His silhouette image has long been the NBA's logo—a fitting symbol for a revered, enigmatic, and deeply private sports icon. But in this book, with unflinching candor and in remarkable detail, Jerry West emerges proudly and boldly from the shadows of his own life." — James S. Hirsch, author of *Willie Mays: The Life, the Legend*

Jerry West is widely regarded as one of the greatest basketball players of all time. After retiring from the Los Angeles Lakers in 1974, West went on to lead the team—first as a coach, and then as the general manager. He lives in California and West Virginia. Jonathan Coleman is the bestselling author of *Exit the Rainmaker*, *At Mother's Request*, and *Long Way to Go*. He is a former producer and correspondent with CBS News. He lives in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Growing up as a basketball junkie, I first read about Jerry West as a kid in some old book pulled off my brothers' bookshelf. I tried to model my practice habits after his own, spending hours outside shooting all on my own. Even then I was fascinated by him, by his great drive. So I was glad to see this book come out. It's only now that I've read *West by West* that I understand what motivated him, at least in part. Jerry is very brave in writing the book and telling the honest details of his life and in sharing so many of his thought processes and emotions with us. An interesting man who thinks widely and deeply about many things—his childhood and family, the pain that fueled him, his career in basketball, happiness, nature, music, art, his relationships, friendships, his loyalty to people and places, education, race, spirituality, life and death—Jerry West looks back and explores his past (and present) candidly. As tough as his public façade may be, he shows that he has great compassion for others and a tender, fragile heart. He describes himself as a wounded boy/man who's continually asking questions, trying to learn and understand more and more about himself and the world. The book is often very sad, so much so that you can feel the depression he battles and understand his frustration in not being able to overcome it—though his story does end with some measure of hope that he has begun to find peace in working through his past. Far more than a shallow tell-all autobiography by a former sports star. Jonathan Coleman, the author who wrote the book with Jerry West, did a great job of staying out of the way and keeping the book in Jerry's voice.

Statement of Fact: Jerry West was my idol growing up, and I even wore his number 44 when I played in high school... and I also patterned my jump shot after his throughout my high school... junior college... military... and amateur career... but this has absolutely nothing to do with my rating

and review of this book. In fact after reading this book... I now know... that the fact that I declared what I just did... would make Jerry very uncomfortable in ways that I and the rest of the public would never have known... until reading this deeply introspective autobiography. I have read innumerable books on Jerry West's career, but none of these previous books can hold a candle to this book. First of all Jerry is the co-author... and as such... he reveals so much of his inner turmoil as a human being... that this "inner-self" that West reveals... would never have been thought to have been examined by any other writer. I would also daresay... that if any author had ever even accidentally asked these questions... West would have stormed out. If you're looking for a cover to cover basketball book that is deep into game by game detail... this is not the book for you. But I can vouch for the fact that there are hundreds of prior books that provide that type of "box score" presentation. This book must have been **\*EXTREMELY-CATHARTIC\*** for Jerry. Never in a million years did I expect the epicenter of this book to be the very heart... soul... fears... shortcomings... anguish... and the very mental "illnesses"... that Hall Of Fame basketball star Jerry West himself is still trying to come to grips with every single day of his life. West and co-author Jonathan Coleman literally use this book like a psychiatrist uses a couch. From Jerry's impoverished West Virginia childhood with an abusive Father that Jerry has never forgiven till this day... and based on this book... will not forgive him... into the eternal thereafter. The lifelong... infinite... idolizing... love... **\*AND LOSS\***... that Jerry has always felt for his brother David who died in the Korean War... has been worn by Jerry for a lifetime like Atlas carrying the world on his shoulder. This love... and loss... is examined so deeply... and from so many different directions... and still with no real answer as to the cumulative effect this has had... and continues to have... on literally every mental and emotional molecule that has made Jerry West... Jerry West. Despite the World Championship Jerry won as a player on the 1972 Los Angeles Lakers (Who with 33 straight wins... still hold the longest continuous winning streak of any professional team in any professional sport.) and the championships he was a part of as general manager of the Lakers... Jerry's proudest athletic accomplishment is winning the Gold Medal as part of the 1960 United States Olympic Team. Throughout this book the author makes more poignant points, about what amount to as "FATHER-SON" relationships with individuals who are not Fathers and sons... such as his feeling that legendary basketball genius Pete Newell (Who coached the 1960 Gold Medal team.) was a Father figure to him... and he felt that he was a Father figure to Kobe Bryant... and puts way less emphasis on the actual scoring of points on the court. West is absolutely dumbfounded and clearly hurt that Kobe Bryant refused to be interviewed for his views on West for this book. Jerry also said that if he knew Shaquille O'Neal in high school... "SHAQ" would have been his best friend! Though, actual on the court action is not the centerpiece of

this masterpiece... when "MR. CLUTCH... THE NBA LOGO"... does discuss the combative nitty-gritty... any knowledgeable basketball fan listens. It was refreshing when Jerry openly... without pulling punches... states why the game used to be better. Even he imagines what he... The Big "O"... Elgin and the others could have done without "HAND-CHECKING" among other changes in the game... including... but not limited to the three point shot. If you do lust for some real basketball related dissertation by a legend... then the chapter entitled **\*\*DREAM GAME\*\*** is worth the entire price of this book by itself. Jerry picks his all-time greatest players and divides them into an East and West team that has nothing to do with geography. He stages the game in his favorite basketball arena of all-time... Madison Square Garden... he even picks the refs... and tells you who would be in the crowd. The reader will learn why Jerry wears number 44... and you'll be reminded that West is the **ONLY PROFESSIONAL PLAYER FROM A LOSING TEAM TO EVER BE VOTED THE UNDISPUTED MOST VALUABLE PLAYER IN A CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES.** (See note 1 below.) You'll also discover parts of Jerry West the human being that Jerry himself has just discovered and doesn't truly understand. The honesty revealed here is unlike anything I've ever been privy to in a venue such as this. Note 1: MVP Dilemma: Bobby Richardson won the 1960 Sport Magazine World Series Most Valuable Player and Bill Mazeroski won the Babe Ruth Award for Most Valuable 1960 World Series Player.

This is a very interesting book. Jerry West took the liberty of writing his book the way he wanted to write it. Not an autobiography summarizing his good deeds but rather a brutally honest review of his weaknesses and continual mention of his friends/associates that he compliments for their role in his life. Basically he is trying to take no credit and mention everyone. AND it's very effective! Now I admit to scanning a couple of sections particularly quotes about a book concerning depression. West manages to take a very glamorous successful life and give the view from his eyes which is of failure as a basketball player, friend and relative. It's certainly a unique approach and well worth the read. Additionally, I know many of the people who were very close to Jerry in Memphis and watched his career here. I served on one charity function with him held at his house where it was openly stated that he doesn't like to do this and might at any time head to his bedroom for the night. Interestingly, he stayed the night and immediately said he would like to do it again the next year. I mention this as you see an incredibly shy individual with many insecurities. But, I also ran in to him at the Regent Beverly Wilshire just after he was named as moving to Memphis. Not wanting to bother him but not wanting to be rude either I did mention we were looking forward to having him. He was incredibly gracious even bubbly talking quite a while which is somewhat at odds with his

introverted description of himself. Basically, he is just a good guy who attempts to make everyone else feel special but struggles internally. I can see where living with him would be difficult. But there was a big inconsistency to me. Reading on Kindle all of the pictures were in the back. When you read of this troubled soul but then look at these pictures of an incredibly full life, they are totally at odds. Reading his acknowledgments also you are overcome with the friends he mentioned. Frankly, I think he mentioned more friends in this section than I have ever had. With his friends, great marriage, and five sons, sounds like a pretty great life to me. This book won't appeal to a basic sports fan looking for sports stories. But from a human interest story, a story of a great legend in Los Angeles or Memphis, this is a perfect book. You will learn about a very interesting man as he bases his soul. Overall, a very good read.

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