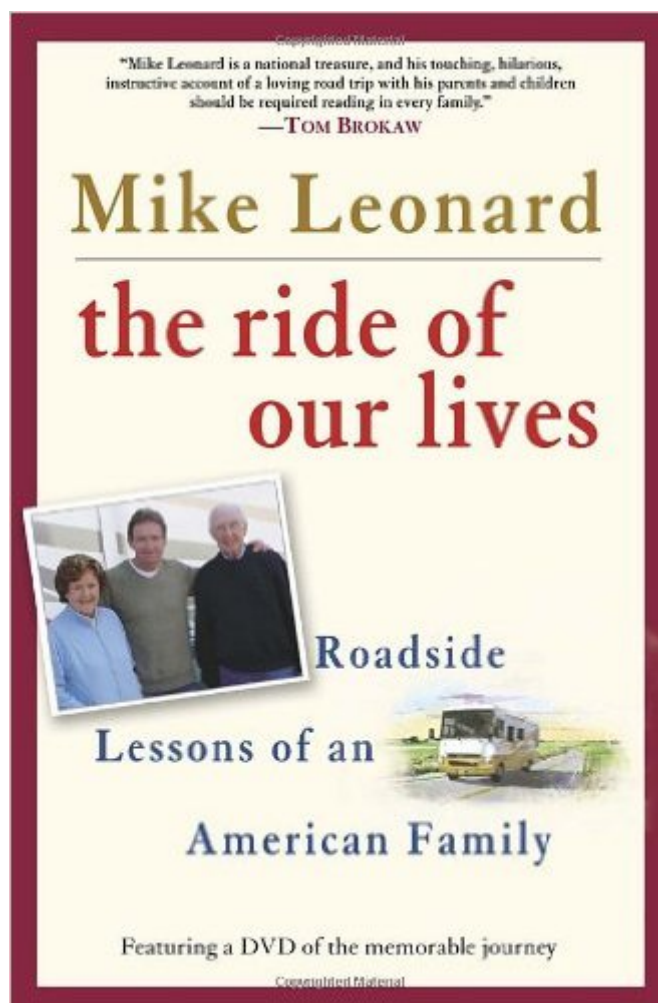


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# The Ride Of Our Lives: Roadside Lessons Of An American Family



## Synopsis

Mike Leonard is a lucky man. It's not everyone who gets parents like Jack and Marge. At eighty-seven, Jack is a pathological optimist with an inexhaustible gift of gab. Marge, Jack's bride of sixty years, though cut from the same rough bolt of Irish immigrant cloth, is his polar opposite—pessimistic and proud of it. What was their son, Mike, thinking when he took a sabbatical from his job with NBC News so he could pile these two world-class originals along with three of his grown kids and a daughter-in-law into a pair of rented RVs and hit the road for a month? Mike was thinking that he wanted to give his parents the ultimate family reunion. And so, one February morning, three generations of Leonards set out on their journey under the dazzling Arizona sky. Thirty minutes later, one of the humongous recreational vehicles has an unplanned meeting with a concrete island at a convenience store. Thus begins the adventure of a lifetime—and an absolute gem of a book. In the course of their humorous, often poignant cross-country tour, from the desert Southwest to the New England coastline, the Leonards reminisce about their loves, their losses, and their rich and heartwarming (and sometimes heartbreaking) lives, while encountering a veritable Greek chorus of roadside characters along the way. The home stretch finds the clan racing back to Chicago, hoping to catch the arrival of the next generation, Jack and Marge's first great-grandchild. Through it all, Mike pieces together a century of family lore and lunacy—and discovers surprising sides to his parents that allow him to see them in a whole new light. Mike Leonard has captivated millions of television viewers with his wry and witty feature stories for NBC's Today. Now he brings that same engaging charm and keen insight to the foibles and passions of his own blessedly unique family. By turns uproariously funny and deeply moving, *The Ride of Our Lives* delivers a lifetime of laughs, lessons, and priceless memories. This edition's exclusive DVD features never-before-seen footage from the trip as well as candid family video and photographs.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 240 pages

Publisher: Ballantine Books; First Edition edition (April 18, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0345481488

ISBN-13: 978-0345481481

Product Dimensions: 6.3 x 1 x 9.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (80 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #163,112 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #39 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > Irish](#) #315 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Journalists](#) #695 in [Books > Travel > Travel Writing](#)

## Customer Reviews

I picked up *The Ride of Our Lives* by Mike Leonard on the recommendation of my mother-in-law, and I've got to remember to thank her! What a wonderful celebration of family, complete with love, tears, reminiscing, RVs, and lots and lots of laughter. Mike Leonard, correspondent for the Today Show, decided a couple of years ago that he needed to take a month off and drive his elderly parents cross country to visit/revisit sites. Enlisting three of his four children to accompany them in two RVs, you immediately get a sense of the type of family they are: right off the bat, the daughter-in-law drives an RV over a concrete barrier, the trip is delayed, and the grandmother flips someone off. Over the course of the month, Mike tells the story of the trip and weaves in stories of his own upbringing and his parents' stories as well. These two octogenarians are both poignant and funny, and while in some respects it may seem as though nothing much is going on during this trip, the reality is that this is a family that knows how to celebrate itself. I found myself giggling over the antics of all the people involved, and tearing up when the realization is made that you really can't go home again. I cannot recommend this book highly enough. It's a quick read, but one that will inch into your soul and stay there, making you take stock of your own family and its values. I can only hope that my own children will grow up feeling as blessed as Mike and his brothers did. You cannot ask for more out of life than that. Recommended!

As a fan of NBC Today, I've seen many segments that Mike Leonard has done. He is hilarious and unique and one story he did in particular, was a cross country journey with his parents and one of his daughters in an RV. I saw it and I loved it. His parents are adorable and funny too and they represent the kind of family you wished you belonged to (though I'm happy with my family). Apparently this story was one of their most memorable stories that's been done. When you buy the book, it has the dvd along with it with the highlights of their vacation. They went through 18 States and were together throughout the whole time. It was an 8 thousand mile journey that ended with Mike's daughter giving birth (to Mike's parents first great-grandchild). He wanted to write this book because it's relatable to so many families. And it is. It's funny and touching and heartwarming and so many other things in between. I really recommend this book because as Mike thinks, it is relatable

to so many people and it's interesting and entertaining and you'll really have a good laugh and enjoy it thoroughly. Great book.

My wife read this book and told me about it, then we watched the DVD which accompanies the book. Change of pace reading for me from history or westerns, and a very refreshing one indeed. While the book and DVD have some poignant segments, it is equally balanced with some outright comical segments. Mike Leonard's parents and the entire Leonard clan are pleasant to meet and this inside look into a zany, lovable group of people is one the reader will not soon forget. Come on, read it. I didn't think I'd care for it, either; but I loved it. This book should get an award for not only its great American family profile but for its inventiveness. There are still real people out there and the foundations of the real America still exists. Hats off to one of the more enjoyable reads/views I've ever experienced. Well recommended. This book will restore any doubts one may have about our country. Semper Fi.

This book is the author's attempt to give his elderly parents one last great adventure! It is filled with memories both interesting, funny, and painful. His parents seem to be such opposites but somehow they mesh. Any age reader will enjoy this but being a person in my early 60s I went on my own short trip down memory lane as many of their memories mirrored mine. Mine weren't of the same places or time periods but they were so similar. I really feel sorry for the kids today who can't get out and explore their neighborhoods, or get bored and create their own games/activities. I have an imagination that sustains me to this time in my life. If you haven't listened to your own parents' stories of childhood borrow Mike's, you're sure to enjoy the ride!

I read this book in two sittings. I think what I loved most was reading, seeing, then hearing a close knit family "warts and all". It would have been easy for Mr Leonard to make his family appear to be un-naturally perfect which would bore most of us or make us wonder why we got stuck with our own families. He showed them how they are, each one different yet all joined spiritually and lovingly and may I add quite funny which made this ride magical for me. Then to have the long DVD...WOW, a true bonus!!!! Here is a book to savor and I am a tough critic. You won't go wrong in spending your dollars on this one. At the end of the book and DVD I was teary eyed because most of my close kin are dead and how I would have loved to have my crazy crew on "the ride of our lives".

I too read this book quite quickly and enjoyed every word! I am going to give a copy to my Dad for

Father's Day. I could hear Mike's voice as he described the ups and downs of dealing with aging parents, and more than once I found myself saying "Amen!" Prepare to laugh and cry with this bunch as you tag along on their "trip of a lifetime."

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