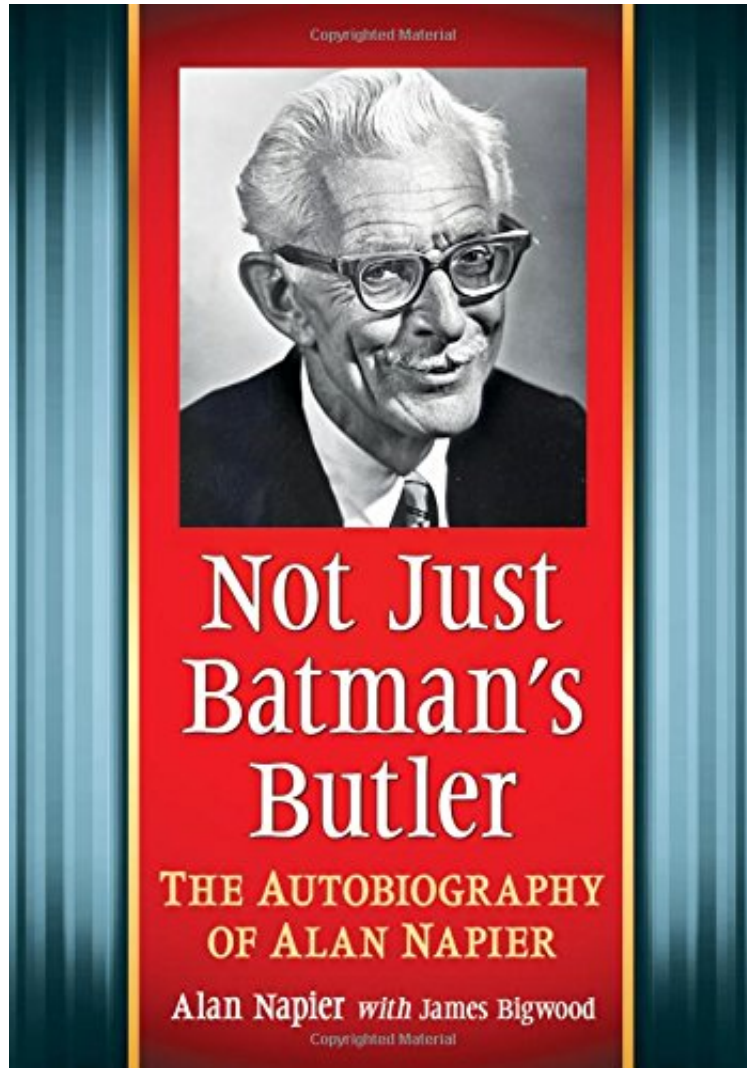


(Mobile book) Not Just Batman's Butler: The Autobiography of Alan Napier

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Alan Napier, James Bigwood

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Alan Napier, James Bigwood : Not Just Batman's Butler: The Autobiography of Alan Napier before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Not Just Batman's Butler: The Autobiography of Alan Napier:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Holy Alfred, Batman! By Peter Bigwood Full disclosure: my brother is the author (along with Alan Napier himself), so I must confess to a certain bias. Still, the book holds together well and the concept combining Napier's unpublished autobiography with additional reporting is a clever one, and I believe (James) Bigwood pulls it off deftly. Couple that with his usual (trust me) meticulous research, and you get a highly readable and accurate account of a fascinating British actor who made the unusual leap, late in life, into the heart of

American pop culture. I only wish there had been more on Julie Newmar. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Bat-phone to the butler's true life. By atiyamhIntimate, revealing. So much more to him than my childhood Batman memories. Must read for original series fans. 11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. The man behind Alfred Pennyworth By Charles Morrow In the early 1970s, during a fallow period in his career, character actor Alan Napier turned his attention to writing an autobiography. He wrote in vivid detail about his experiences on the London stage in the 1920s and 30s, when he worked alongside the likes of Gielgud, Olivier, Noel Coward, Gladys Cooper, Claude Rains, etc. He reminisced about his busy years in Hollywood during the 40s and 50s, when he played opposite top stars in such films as *The Invisible Man Returns*, *The Uninvited*, *Three Strangers*, *Sinbad the Sailor*, *Across the Wide Missouri*, etc. He did not sidestep the unhappy events of his life: Napier is candid about his childhood in a troubled upper class family, his anxious adolescence at various boarding schools, and a surprising familial connection his controversial cousin Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister of Great Britain in the years leading up to World War II. He writes with almost painful frankness about his disastrous first marriage, his late-blooming appreciation for intimacy, and other personal matters. He discusses his professional successes and failures, including the difficult period in the 1950s, when he ran afoul of Hollywood's right-wingers due to his liberal political beliefs; or rather, due to his unwillingness to keep his mouth shut. Although Napier was never blacklisted outright, he was gray-listed, and was no longer offered plum roles in prestigious films. But he kept on working, in B pictures, occasionally on stage, and especially in television. Which brings us to the role for which he is best remembered: Alfred Pennyworth, butler to Bruce Wayne on the 1966-68 TV series *Batman*. The show was wildly popular in its time, and remains a perennial cult favorite. Napier appreciated the recognition the role brought him, and most certainly appreciated the royalty checks the show brought his way, but he seems not to have considered the experience especially noteworthy otherwise, and devoted only a few brief paragraphs to it in his memoir. (His intended title for the book, incidentally, was *Footsteps in the Sand*.) Ironically, Napier had little to say about the one role for which he's best remembered. This is where editor James Bigwood comes to the fore: he has contributed extensive supplementary material to Napier's text, not only regarding the *Batman* phenomenon, but also about other aspects of Alan's life and work not otherwise covered, or mentioned only in passing. He supplies chapters on Napier's film and TV work, and on his life from the mid-1970s until his death in 1988, filling in the period after Napier's original text concludes. Perhaps at this point I should mention that I have a personal connection to the project. Mr. Bigwood happens to be a cousin of mine, as well as a longtime friend and fellow film buff. Prior to the publication of *Not Just Batmans Butler* he shared the text with me, and I offered a few comments and suggestions. But let me emphasize, Jim deserves all the credit for the finished product. He was the one who tracked down the manuscript and secured the permission of the Napier family to get it published. Jim also located lots of rare, unusual photos, ones you won't find online or in other books or magazine pieces that touch on the movies, plays, and TV shows mentioned. I have several favorites, but one in particular that strikes my fancy dates from a 1931 stage production of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, and depicts the 28-year-old Alan playing an elderly dignitary (he often played older roles in his youth) opposite the titular character, portrayed by the one and only Elsa Lanchester in male drag! In sum, I can honestly say that, although I'd heard about this book for a long time before I finally read it this summer, it's better than I ever imagined. By that I mean it transcends the typical actor's memoir, as it is better written and considerably more substantial than the average book of this type. Mr. Napier, who worked on a number of literary projects over the years, shows a real flair for writing. He's witty, perceptive, and warm. In a way it's too bad he didn't pursue a writing career more extensively, especially in his later years, when the acting gigs were comparatively few and far between. But at long last we have this autobiography, a notable accomplishment for its author, and for its editor. *Not Just Batmans Butler* offers a rich and vivid impression of the somewhat enigmatic man behind the many fine performances. Readers interested in classic era Hollywood filmmaking, the legitimate stage during its inter-war heyday, television of the post-war era, and, generally speaking, 20th century popular culture, will find much in it to savor.

In January 1966, Alan Napier became a household name on ABC's hit series *Batman* (1966-1968) as Alfred Pennyworth, loyal butler to the show's title character. This "overnight success" came after 16 years of stage work (and the occasional film) in his native England and 26 years of film and television work (and the occasional play) in the United States. In the early 1970s, Napier wrote an autobiography, detailing his childhood as a "poor relation" of the famous Birmingham political family the Chamberlains (Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain was a cousin), and his collaborations over the years with the likes of John Gielgud, Laurence Olivier, George Bernard Shaw, Noel Coward, Fritz Lang, Otto Preminger and Alfred Hitchcock. Almost 30 years after Napier's death, James Bigwood, who first read the manuscript in 1975 when interviewing the actor for a *Films in Review* profile, has prepared it for publication. This is Alan Napier's story in his own words, annotated and updated, with dozens of rare photographs.

"A treasure"--*Examiner*; "Jim Bigwood has done us all a great favor by bringing Alan Napier's autobiography to print"--*It's About TV!*. About the Author James Bigwood has written articles for *American Film* and *American Cinematographer*. He is also a television producer whose credits include *Being Mary Jane*, *The Red Road*, *Mercy*,

Lipstick Jungle and The Black Donnellys. He lives in Atlanta, Georgia.