



While They're Still Here: A Memoir

Patricia Williams

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After a lifetime of strained bonds with her aging parents, Patricia Williams finds herself in the unexpected position of being their caregiver and neighbor. As they all begin to navigate this murky battleground, the long-buried issues that have divided their family for decades--alcoholism, infidelity, opposing politics--rear up and demand to be addressed head-on.

Williams answers the call of duty with trepidation at first, confronting the lines between service and servant, guardian and warden, while her parents alternately resist her help and wear her out. But by facing each new struggle with determination, grace, and courage, they ultimately emerge into a dynamic of greater transparency, mutual support, and teachable moments for all. Honest and humorous, graceful and grumbling, *While They're Still Here* is a poignant story about a family that waves the white flag and begins to heal old wounds as they guide each other through the most vulnerable chapter of their lives.

While They're Still Here: A Memoir Details

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From Reader Review While They're Still Here: A Memoir for online ebook

Diana Paul says

While They're Still Here--Patricia Williams

To untangle the difficulties of becoming the parent to an aging parent is the zeitgeist of our time as baby boomers and younger generations have to embark on a painful journey requiring great courage and honesty. In "While They're Still Here" Patricia Williams discusses the eventual incapacitation of both her elderly parents, making plans for the end of life, as she imagines what might be in store for her: "When I tiptoed into the house, the boiled-cabbage fumes of old age foreshadowed my future."

Touching similar themes in my novel, "Things Unsaid", the memoir "While They're Still Here" tackles the remorse, sadness, and sense of loss in a non-fictional format. "While They're Still Here" gives us an unflinching emotional and brutally honest account of the author's helplessness and discomfort at watching her loved ones become shells of their former selves. Held by the powerful tug of family obligations growing up in a restrained fifties' childhood, the author copes with past family dysfunction:-- "a landmark divide in our mother-daughter relationship" .? Exhausted by her caregiving duties and unpleasant memories of her parents when young, Williams nevertheless persists: "I told myself things would get better because they couldn't get much worse. Could they?"

Stoic, compassionate, and above all realizing that this is her last chance to repair her relationship with her parents, we see her inner turmoil: "Straightening my invisible caregiver's uniform, I zipped up my courage, tucked in my compassion, and pasted on my smile. I could do this. I had to do this." And, "I thanked my guardian angels for guiding us in those early days, somehow lighting the path for us to put down our swords and start fresh with each other." An essential journal of love, caring, and forgiving for us all!

manatee says

I just loved this book. Patricia Williams is an incredible writer.

Her beautifully crafted sentences and wonderfully realized portrait of her parents make this book a real winner.

I could not put it down.

A brilliant book like this makes Reader's Advisory so difficult. Why? If someone asks me "Have you read any good books? Can you recommend anything? I can say, "yes, I have read While They're Still Here: A Memoir.

Next question: Well, what is it about?

Well, it's about a Lesbian Dental Hygienist who must care for her elderly parents.

But, a short synopsis like that would not even begin to describe this absolutely wonderful book. I read it. I laughed. I cried. It is definitely a must read for anyone with parents.

Debi Lantzer says

I received this book as part of a BookSparks Memoir Book Tour last year. I thought I had posted my review before sending the book to my mother to read, but as I was cleaning up paperwork this weekend, I saw I never posted my review. Then, when my mother read the book, she sent me her review, and apparently I never posted that either. Since my mom's was already typed up, I thought I'd just hit "post" and share about While They're Still Here by Patricia Williams with all of you.

A couple of things about me that you may or may not know: I moved from a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio to Sarasota County, Florida in 2000. In this story, the parents moved from a distant suburb of Cleveland - namely, Elyria. The parents then moved to a Sarasota County, Florida residence - namely, the City of Englewood. I currently live in Sarasota County myself. Kind of coincidental there, huh?

Back to the book at hand..... I received a box full of memoirs and was talking to my mother on the phone as I opened the box. As I read the titles, she had me read the back of the book to her to see if there were any she might be interested in reading and reviewing for us. She chose today's book, While They're Still Here by Patricia Williams. This is what Gloria reported:

"When I chose this book I wanted to learn how to deal with aging parents as my husband and I are the aging parents of 2 adult children. This is an excellent source of information for the adult child who will become the caregiver.

This story begins with Trish Williams arriving at her elderly parent's home in Englewood, Florida from her home of twenty years living with her partner Katy Murray in Olympia, Washington. Her parents had moved to Englewood, Florida from their hometown of Elyria, Ohio fourteen years ago leaving behind all their relatives and friends. Her mother and father had visited her in Olympia, Washington several times over the years.

Taking care of aging parents is not easy. Trish Williams shares her journey of being responsible for their welfare and learning to respect her parent's intelligence and independence while taking care of her own health and life. She is one of 3 children. She has an older sister Linda and a younger brother Chip.

Following Trish's difficult journey as her caregiving tasks begins to mount you learn about their strain emotions, the intimate moments, the roller coaster ride of their health issues, the family history, family secrets, the mother's drinking habits, the father's seizures and visual problems, the family pets and who to care for them and how to make the best of the time she had left to be with them.

Patricia Williams has done an excellent job of taking care of her parents for 10 years, taking notes and writing them down. The notes then became this story. You can clearly see the love that Trish had for her parents and you will fall in love with them also. This is a must read."

I received a complimentary copy of this book from the publishers and BookSparks in exchange for this post, which is my honest review and unbiased opinion.

Virginia Simpson says

Patricia Williams' compelling debut memoir, *While They're Still Here*, is a smart, insightful, honest, poignant, and delightfully told story of the years Williams was her parents' caretaker. As Williams traverses the difficulties inherent in caregiving, we witness her brilliant insights into reframing situations and self-talk in a way that makes any situation more manageable. I fell in love with her parents and you will too. This is the book I wish had existed when I was caretaking my own mother. A definite must read! -Virginia A. Simpson, Ph.D., FT, award-winning author of *The Space Between: A Memoir of Mother-Daughter Love at the End of Life*

Cheryl says

I have thought of the day that I will have to care for my parents but I hope that day is long away. Author, Patricia Williams shares the bad and the good times of being caretaker to her parents.

Reading this book, let me get a glimpse into Patricia and her parent's life. It was like I had known Patricia's parents for years. So, when they had "victories" I was smiling and happy for them. For example: Patricia's father could no longer be handy man around the house but he took it upon himself to construct a big dollhouse including painting it. The handy man who had come around to assist around the house, complimented Patricia's father on his work.

Additionally, I enjoyed the stories that Patricia's parents shared as they traveled down memory lane. As I read this book, again I can not help but imagine what that "someday" will be like for me and my parents. I enjoyed reading this memoir. If you don't take anything else away from this book, just remember that "always is not forever".

Cynthia Murray says

Truly remarkable as this is a story of one family's attempt to heal the wounds of the past, forging a new dynamic of compassion, acceptance and forgiveness. A must read for those who love and care for their elderly parents!

Story Circle Book Reviews says

According to the National Alliance for Caregiving, more than 21% of the U.S. population is providing care for an aging family member. Author Patricia Williams was surprised to find herself in this situation when she became a full-time caregiver for both her parents in 2003. A retired dental hygienist, Patricia had a strained relationship with them, complicated by alcoholism and infidelity.

So, it was with grace, acceptance, and a little bit of humor that Patricia uproots her parents and moves them closer to her, fully expecting to say good-bye within months. Instead, this delightful book chronicles the next ten years as the author not only serves as caregiver for her parents, but discovers a rich family history that goes a long ways towards explaining their emotional wounds.

What began as notes to her brother turned into paragraphs, and ultimately *While They're Still Here*, a book that becomes a sort of tribute to the elderly couple. This poignant memoir is a wonderful example of a caregiving experience, in that it doesn't shy away from the difficult truths. Despite the challenges inherent in

her upbringing, the author remained respectful of her parents at all times. The reader can't help but admire the elderly couple as they face one medical crisis after another, or the author as she comes to their aid. By book's end, it is clear that despite the difficulties inherent in caregiving, the author looked at those years as a gift. This book is a must-read for anyone facing a similar situation, but you don't have to have cared for an elderly parent to appreciate this author's journey.

by Mary Potter Kenyon
for Story Circle Book Reviews
reviewing books by, for, and about women

Anna Hanson says

Having been my parents' caregiver and "girl Friday" in their last years, I could fully relate to Ms. Williams' account, both of her internal dialogue and debate, as well as the demands of caring for the folks, while helping them preserve their dignity and right to choose. Touching and poignant, I felt like I was curled up on the sofa, hearing a great storyteller weave her spell of lore. I tried to read slowly, to savor every scrap, but found myself flying along to the next paragraph, page, chapter, and relishing every bite. Go ahead, enjoy the feast!
