



A Marriage in Dog Years: A Memoir

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When Nancy Balbirer learns her beloved eleven-year-old beagle has kidney failure, she's devastated. She and her husband had gotten Ira as a puppy—a wedding gift to each other, and their first foray into “parenthood.” Now, her dog is terminal, her marriage is on life support, and Nancy is desperate to save them both (whether they want it or not). In a single year, she loses her two best friends, but Nancy's life is about to take yet another unexpected turn.

With humor and heart, Nancy Balbirer shares her story of relationships, loss, and canine friendship in this illuminating memoir about the lengths people will go to keep love alive...and the power of finally letting go.

A Marriage in Dog Years: A Memoir Details

Date : Published June 1st 2018 by Little A

ISBN :

Author : Nancy Balbirer

Format : Kindle Edition 224 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir, Biography

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From Reader Review A Marriage in Dog Years: A Memoir for online ebook

Chani Knight says

More like 4.5 stars. But still. This was a well written memoir that really touched on how we start to view our past and present when it feels like we have lost control. Also how we use different units of measurement - i.e. the dog - to try and quantify or even qualify a situation or timeline to follow what they've been through with us.

Our pets don't live for nearly as long as we all wish they did, but it is entirely true for this book that we all are lucky to have our pets while we do. They are truly unmatched in their comfort and (genuine) unconditional love.

♥Marie Gentilcore says

I really enjoyed this memoir and I thought the title of this book was clever. When the author and her husband first got together, they adopted a beagle puppy and named him Ira. As the book begins, Ira is nearing the end of his life and so is the author's marriage. The events were sad but also interesting. I look forward to reading more by this author because I liked the flow of her writing, it was so smooth and never caused me to stumble as I read. It had an easy flow to it which I really liked.

Fiona Macdougall says

Wonderful, raw and very open and honest. We all go through trauma in our lives but to be so honest is refreshing. It was absolutely devastating in places and relatable. Amazing!

Melissa Jackson says

Wordy

Way too many different words to say the exact same things over and over. Ira was the only character I liked.

Kayo says

This book really hit me. Very enjoyable although the points were tough. Highly recommend.

Melki says

A dissatisfied husband, a neurotic wife, and a terminally ill dog.

Can't they all just get along?

I will not rate, as I'm throwing in the towel at 33%. I was getting pretty annoyed by all the New Agey, therapeutic wellness stuff. (A DOG PSYCHIC? Seriously?) This is a couple who looks only to external sources to solve their marital problems; they're on their THIRD marriage counselor, for cryin' out loud! BUT, when I read that they had **NOT HAD SEX IN YEARS** that was it for me. GEEZ! I'm willing to bet Mike Pence and his "Mother" do it more often.

I'll be celebrating my 27th year of wedded bliss on Saturday, and part of what has kept my husband and I together is good, and pretty darned frequent S-E-X. Is sex an essential component of a happy marriage? *Possibly* not, but it's a hell of a lot easier to forgive those hairs in the sink if the one who put 'em there has just given you a screaming orgasm.

Really, if you can't connect in bed, why linger? Yeah, I get it - you have a family together, but why not get divorced, share custody of your daughter (and dog), and just be friends? If you have to WORK SO HARD at STAYING married - what is the point?

If this memoir had been better written, I might have stuck around out of curiosity to see how this sex-free relationship thingy works, but it was a fairly disorganized mess. Plus, the daughter is named Bear, and the dog is named Ira, and I've had so many friends who named their dogs Bear, I kept getting the two confused. (Yeah, *that* one's on me.) Ultimately I had to ask myself, if the narrator was a character in a novel, would I keep on reading, and the answer was a resounding NO.

Mags says

Here is a Whole-Foods-eating, cleansing-candle-lighting, psychic-consulting, horoscope-believing, chi-modifying, yoga-ing, wine-shop-owning, witch-seeking-when-stumped ex-actress-turned-writer's majestic *I, I, I!* monologue.

Don't get me wrong, it's certainly an incredibly sad interlacing of two heartbreaks—a dying dog and a dying marriage. But it was just, I don't know, a bit too narcissistic to spark empathy. I love my dog and during the parts about Ira's illness, I just didn't want to even imagine them happening to me, couldn't even fathom how much my heart would break, but the parts about Nancy's marriage with Sam? It was 90% of the book and it was toxic, horrible, and self-centered. The negativity completely obscured the emotions the author was able to extract from me.

I understand that this could possibly be the story of her searching for her lost self in the midst of a divorce and loss. I also understand that no one who is not even the least bit self-centered will write a memoir. But I've read memoirs before. I've read losses and people undergoing grief and I guess here, the "About Me" just shines a tad brighter than the other, more important stuff. I didn't get to know Sam, I couldn't root for him. And I know this is not like a fictive story where the author gets her pickings of how to portray the story; this is all Nancy's perspective and hers alone.

Most of the time, it felt like the ramblings of a privileged girl kvetching to her girlfriends at Starbucks about her first-world problems. Page 91: "These frenzied imaginings occurred not in a war-torn country but rather in the luxury of a goose-down, duvet-covered California king." *shrugs* Sucks to be you.

I can't be totally blamed for my lack of empathy for anyone here other than the dog. I did cry when he died because it was sad, an event that didn't center *her*. The parts about Ira were the real poignant ones (cause of the three-star rating), where you could see that the author cared truly about something/one else who is not herself.

I guess this is why I don't read actors' memoirs and might not again: too much ego to be contained in a few hundred pages!

Barbara says

I've been on a good run with Amazon's monthly free books for Prime members for the past few months. With two great, positive, life-affirming, building-yourself-up-again-after-great-loss novels ('Digging In' by Loretta Nyhan and 'When Never Comes' by Barbara Davis) in March and April, I was hoping my good fortune would continue when I picked the autobiographical 'A Marriage in Dog Years' for my May choice. It's about a woman with a terminally ill dog and a terminally declining marriage. Sadly my luck ran out and what I got was a self-indulgent misery-fest of great proportions.

The author is apparently an actress, a comedy writer and – as we learn in the book – a failed restaurateur – but the book is one heck of a let-down. It's hard to be funny about topics like this and I suspect her natural wit was completely constrained by the topic.

I try to be kind when reviewing autobiographies because I feel like a total louse because any criticism of the book inevitably looks like criticism of the author herself and I am absolutely sure she's a delightful, kind, thoughtful person 'in the flesh' but on the page my over-riding wish was to give her a darned good shake and tell her to pull herself together.

I'm sure that writing the book was cathartic but reading it was a drag. I couldn't buy into all the spiritual mumbo-jumbo of witches and candles, nor into the way she dragged out poor Ira's life well beyond the point that she or he could really afford. I expected to be upset by the poor dog's demise, but honestly, I was just so sad that he'd been kept going so long that it was a relief when the poor creature slipped away (not a spoiler – she tells us at the very beginning exactly how long her beagle survives so there's no hope of a miracle cure). As for the marriage to a man who was getting steak in Florida and avoiding potatoes at home, I think most of us would have kicked his butt out the door faster than you could say 'Cheating selfish bastard'. If you want a book about loving a dog that will make you cry for hours after you finish (and for quite a lot of time whilst you're reading), please track down the sublime 'Lily and the Octopus', a book about a relationship of more equal standing behind a man and the dog he adores.

I wish the author well, hope she finds new love with a dog and a good man, but I also hope she can put her bad years behind her and resist the temptation to revisit them in print.

Dottie Resnick says

Although the book was promising, it was also disappointing. After 11 years of marriage, the puppy that was a wedding present to each other is now dying as is the marriage. The author spent a lot of time justifying keeping the dog alive, despite horrendous vet bills (which the couple really couldn't afford) in hopes of also keeping her marriage alive. Felt the story which really related more to the disintegrating marriage and two

individual with difficulties "finding themselves" was at times funny, however, also disheartening.

Booksandchinooks (Laurie) says

Thank you to Little a and Amazon Publishing for a free copy of this book for an honest review. This memoir details the author's heartbreak over her dying dog and her failing marriage. Nancy and Sam have been married 11 years and have a young daughter. They adopted their dog, Ira, just after they got married. Ira is very sick and Nancy is determined to prolong his life for as long as she can if he's not in pain. I have also had to deal with a sick pet after having it for 16 years and I know the struggle to accept when the end has come and your own heartbreak so therefore I could feel some of her grief. In this case though Nancy prolonged Ira's life as she couldn't cope with losing him in the midst of her dysfunctional marital problems. Her husband Sam comes across as very immature and selfish but we of course don't know his side of the story. Nancy is stuck in life in general as she spends well beyond her means to save Ira while also unable to decide if she should give up on her marriage with her unfaithful and unengaged spouse. I felt there was a lot of repetition as she goes back and forth with her struggles. While I sympathized with her marital problems it was apparent that Sam had checked out long ago and it was better to move on as hard as this is. I found this book a bit too self indulgent. Having said this I did enjoy the book and have a lot of empathy for what the author was going through.

Melanie McKinley says

Happy at times and sad at times

SPOILER ALERT.

I cried so hard at end. The story was just amazing I am still crying right now ?

Donna says

I chose this book as my Amazon Prime Reads choice for the month of May. A Marriage In Dog Years is officially on Friday, June 1st so look for it on Amazon soon!

Meh. I felt meh throughout the entire book. Spoiler alert, I'm going to essentially tell you about this book so if you're curious about it, stop reading my blog post right now and come back after you've read it. Or heed my warning and know that you really are not missing much by passing on this book.

The book starts out with us finding out she found the love of her life, Sam. Sam even comes and rescues her on the middle of a busy California freeway when her car breaks down. It is at this point we realize the marriage is doomed as Nancy tells us, “it will occur to me that I had been so moved by the romance, the love, the chivalry of it all, that I had failed to notice we were not traveling west, but east—away from the sun.”

Nancy and Sam adopt a dog, Ira, and move from California to New York. Nancy yearns to be a mother and ends up going through IVF treatments to conceive. Heartbreakingly she becomes pregnant with twins and loses one. She does give birth to a health baby girl they nickname the Bear. It is here we find out that Sam really did not want to become a father, he just knew Nancy really wanted to be a mother and he wanted to make sure he was happy. Wait, Sam gets even better.

Ira is eleven years old and is diagnosed with a terminal illness and given a matter of weeks to live. Don't worry, Ira makes it another year. As Ira gets ill, the marriage falls apart. Well, the marriage is already in shambles at this point in time, we just get to hear how it all falls apart.

Sam “accidentally” forwards her a text from his mistress. He's cheating. Nancy and Sam have been in therapy and this gets brought up. Sam wants to keep seeing the mistress while he works on his marriage. Nancy agrees. Sam is a winner, isn't he?

The book goes on and they divorce...finally. I cannot believe how long Nancy held on to her marriage, trying to make it work. Nancy describes it best when she wrote, “when a marriage is in crisis, there's only so long you can pretend before dull pain turns into searing agony.” She held on for so long. I was angry with her for holding on for so long. Sam was wishy washy and didn't stick with anything long-term. She truly deserves better.

So after the divorce comes the death of Ira. I cried. We just lost our sweet little pup Rose over the summer and just reading the demise of Ira brought back memories and I let it out. Dogs become a part of our lives and Ira became her best friend.

Overall, I give this book a 3. I didn't care for it and I felt like the author wrote this book with a thesaurus of big words by her side. I don't know if I'm dumb or she was showing off or if I was just so irritated with her and how she handled her crumbling marriage I just resented everything she wrote. I struggled to find the motivation to finish this book, but I did it.

BLS and QF says

Beautiful and raw

I started reading this book this morning and couldn't put it down until the last page. So raw and beautiful. I cried and laughed and felt really connected with the author. This memoir reveals her marriage, the perfect beginning, the changes in careers/goals, the infertility, IVF, the lack of sex, counseling, sacrifices, the distance, and finally the end. Meanwhile it parallels her relationship with her dog who she got right after they were married. The story begins with the dog's terminal diagnosis and unravels through the final year of his life and her marriage. I find the memoir very honest and really enjoyed her reflections on life and love. Would recommend.

Jennifer Blankfein says

AVAILABLE IN JUNE! PRE-ORDER NOW! Author Nancy Balbirer takes us with her on the rocky journey of life as we see her joy filled marriage filled with hopes and dreams blossom then fizzle, at the same time her beloved, terminally ill beagle struggles to defy the odds and live another day. This touching true story is told with honesty and humor, stirring up so many different emotions...well written in the author's voice, it had me crying and laughing. I'd like to compare this story to SJP's Divorce on HBO, the good, the bad and the ugly of a slow death of a marriage, a complicated relationship with the added bonus of unconditional love in man's/woman's best friend. If you love love, and if you love your pet, this one is for you!

Follow <https://booknationbyjen.wordpress.com> for full reviews and recommendations.

Deborah says

Sweet and sad

So many feelings so aptly expressed in this book. Very well written and I could relate to so much of her story about her marriage and the horror of losing her precious dog, Ira. Definitely glad I read this book
