



In This Together: My Story

Ann Romney

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When Mitt and Ann Romney met in their late teens, a great American love story began. And their life together would be blessed: five healthy sons, financial security, and a home filled with joy. Despite the typical ups and downs, they had a storybook life.

Then, in 1998, Ann was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. She couldn't believe it was real; there were no therapies or treatments to help her. Mitt told her that day that they would tackle the diagnosis as a team: They were in it together. "As long as it isn't fatal, we're fine. If you have to be in a wheelchair, I'll be right there to push it," he told her. And Ann thought, "But I'll be the one in the wheelchair." A caregiver and helper her whole life, she'd crossed a terrible invisible line. She wouldn't be able to care for her family anymore. She was the patient. Ann and Mitt would face the most frightening and humbling experience of their lives.

From reflections on her early life, her marriage, and her diagnosis and recovery, the sources of her faith, and the stories of others who overcame adversity and inspired her to keep going, *In This Together* is a brave and deeply honest portrait of a family facing an unexpected blow, often in the most public of circumstances.

"A lot of people talk about a transformation that happens when life throws you a curve ball, and the big one in my life was my MS diagnosis. With all the blessings I've had, MS has been my greatest teacher: It has taught me about faith, compassion, and serving others. I've met many people along the way who've shared advice and demonstrated enormous resilience in the face of challenges; their stories gave me strength. In sharing my story, I want to give others hope as I've been given hope on this journey."

In This Together: My Story Details

Date : Published September 29th 2015 by Thomas Dunne Books

ISBN : 9781250083975

Author : Ann Romney

Format : Hardcover 272 pages

Genre : Biography, Autobiography, Memoir, Nonfiction

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From Reader Review In This Together: My Story for online ebook

Liz Logan says

Stunningly smug, shallow and clueless, this is supposed to be an inspirational autobiography about a woman whose big thing in life is dressage. I read it because I am interested in neurodegenerative diseases, but Romney attributes her relatively happy experience in having mostly-in-remission MS to dressage and her "faith." She and her husband are on another planet, a rich, Mormon one which bears no relationship to the one we "little people" experience.

Elaine Smith says

Loved this book! We lived in Boston and were aquatinted with the Romney's. Such real great people. The way she has battled MS is incredible. Good read for anyone!

Valerie says

This book made me cry in public... I haven't done that since I was knocked over in the grocery store by one of my first spasms 10 months ago. Reading this book felt like reading my own thoughts, feelings and fears. If you or somebody you know suffers from a neurological disease then you should put all of your political bias aside and read this book. Some things in life are about more than political beliefs or religion... Sometimes people who are as different as night and day can share something in common that gives them a bond, in spite of their differences in other aspects of life. Ann Romney is doing important things in the world of MS research, and she is working hand in hand with people of all different political and religious backgrounds because there are some causes that are worth putting differences behind us.

Shauna says

This felt like such an honest portrayal of Ann's life. We have dealt with several life changing events in our life and so much of what she said rings true. And it doesn't matter who we are or what our station in life, we all will have challenges. How we deal with them is what makes us who we are. I appreciated her comments about her faith and beliefs. She did not shy away from that, but she didn't spend a lot of time dwelling on it either. She is a strong woman, one who deserves a lot of respect for who she is, not because of the good man she married. I respect the relationship she has with her husband and the fact that they work so well together. It's nice to know there are still wonderful leaders out there who have values and integrity.

Lydia Dn says

I enjoyed this a lot more than I expected to. Ann Romney made me laugh, cry, and appreciate my work as a mother all over again. She's a pretty classy lady, and it was sad to hear her frustrations about how cruelly her

family was portrayed as "out of touch" and cold. They do represent a more traditional kind of family than is popular these days, but we need all sorts of people in this world. And she is a strong family builder for sure. I find it frustrating that she is so vilified as a rich, spoiled woman who's out of touch with "real" problems. Give me a break, everyone in life has problems -- and the people who think those with money are somehow immune to life just strike me as the ones who are out of touch with reality. There is always something we can learn from others.

This was an easy, enjoyable read.

Kathryn says

First sentence: My son Tagg was working for the Los Angeles Dodgers when Mitt decided he was going to run for president.

Favorite quote: I was on the top of the mountain looking out at the Wasatch Mountains, for the first time in months I felt strong enough to cry.

This was a lovely book to read. Ann writes honestly, lovingly, and as though we were sitting at her kitchen table and talking. She shares a great deal about her personal life as a wife, mother, possible first lady and someone who has MS as well as gone through breast cancer. She touches on it all with grace and dignity.

Steve says

"By nature, I'm quite shy." Well, actually not that shy. Growing up maybe. Growing up, Ann Romney may have been "always the shyest girl in (her) class." But, not now. Not after giving birth to five sons, becoming the grandmother of twenty-three and a former First Lady of Massachusetts. Add to that resume "author."

Here the former introvert has written sort of a 258-page manual that could be subtitled, "What to do when life hands you a bag of rocks." That seems to be her theme here. For Romney she got her bag of rocks in November of 1997 when medical tests showed she has multiple sclerosis. As Romney explains, MS "is an autoimmune disease in which your own body is actually eating away the insulation protecting your nerves. . . . Basically, (MS) keeps (your) brain from telling your muscles what to do." Romney eventually learned she carries a category of MS "where an attack of symptoms is followed by a remission." The other basic category of MS, progressive MS is defined by "symptoms proceeding without interruption toward greater and greater disability."

A steroid, cortisone, Romney reports, is "one of the drugs most commonly used to fight MS." The downside is, "cortisone depletes your calcium, weakening your bones." Romney also documents other so called holistic treatments or alternative medical techniques reportedly effective in some MS patients. Craniosacral therapy, reflexology, acupuncture are some of those options. What causes MS "has not yet been answered." There is no cure, but "much has been learned about it."

"Don't be afraid of anything" and "make the most of every opportunity" was the advice Romney's father, Edward Roderick Davies gave his daughter on his Stuart, Florida hospital death bed in 1992. This personal journal of Romney's journey through the ups-and-downs of an incurable disease seems to confirm she

followed that wise counsel to the letter.

Romney does make some curious statements here. For example, “I think life is almost indiscriminate. I’ve never believed that there was a master plan. I don’t think I was given this disease because I would do something good because of it. I think life hits us all and then we have to make choices.” And then there’s this: “Our faith was never tested.” Or how about that moment when the author’s husband, Mitt Romney lost the 2012 presidential election? “Other people might remind me that I had my faith for support, which remained unshaken. There is truth to that, but honestly that night it made little difference.” Little difference? Really, Mrs. Romney? Really? Consider this: “I don’t see (her disease) as being part of any Grand Design. I don’t think God had a hand in this.” Really? Well, on the other hand, earlier she does credit her belief in the doctrine of the Mormon Church with having some impact. Although she lists it towards the end: “For me, reflexology, yoga, acupuncture, meditation, horses and faith, as well as a healthy diet consisting of organic foods and little meat---with a healthy dose of vitamin D from sunlight---have made all the difference.”

Ann Romney also addresses the 900-pound gorilla in the room. “Our family’s wealth was always an issue in the media and, in many cases, for our (political) opponents. The image that often was conveyed was that we were so wealthy we were out of touch with the average American.” Ann Romney’s response to that image? “Mitt’s fifteen years as pastor of church congregations and his service as governor in providing health care for all (Massachusetts residents) was simply ignored.” Am I missing something here? How does that argument prove the Romney’s were and still are in touch with the average American?

Consider this La Jolla, California dispatch from the Boston Globe:

On a recent weekday, a half-dozen construction workers crowded onto a small plot of land in this pricey community, banging away on an 11,000-square-foot house with expansive oceanfront views that will soon replace one a fraction of the size.

There’s a large master suite, a room for all the beach gear — and a car elevator. Outside, scrawled in graffiti on a wall separating the property from the beach, was a message touting Mitt Romney for president.

Two years ago, Mitt Romney didn’t think he would run for political office again. And in the aftermath of his bitter defeat in the presidential campaign, he embarked on something of a real estate spree. He simultaneously began building two multimillion-dollar homes, one here on the Pacific Ocean and another outside Salt Lake City. He also bought a third, a slope side ski chalet in Park City, Utah.

Or, consider this dispatch from the Portland Press Herald:

In 1997, the Romney’s plunked down \$3 million for a summer home situated on 11 acres of lakefront in New Hampshire. The 3-story, 6-bedroom contemporary sits along Lake Winnepesaukee in Wolfeboro, “the oldest summer resort in America.”

With a 5,400-square-foot main house and additional guest house, the estate is worth an estimated \$10 million. Home to the Romney crew — children and grandchildren — each summer, some wonder if the GOP candidate’s familiarity with the state helped him clinch the New Hampshire primary.

Romney’s recent real estate purchase is the most modest on the list. In June 2010, he and Ann bought a 2-bedroom townhouse in suburban Belmont. According to property listing information, the Romney’s paid \$895,000 for the 2,100-square-foot home in the new residential development The Woodlands. Since selling their Belmont mansion, this is the first property they’ve owned in the Boston area in two years.

In touch with the average American? Well, if the average American owns vacation homes in New Hampshire and Utah and residences on the east and west coast, yeah, I guess the Romney's are in touch. In touch with the average billionaire.

Money or not, the author spends the last chapter of her medical memoir documenting the history and development of the Ann Romney Center for Neurologic Diseases. The research center serves the needs of "more than 50 million people worldwide" affected by five diseases of the brain. Romney wraps it all up with a twelve-step survival plan not if, but when life hands you a bag of rocks. That alone is worth the price of admission.

The Just-About-Cocky Ms M says

I loathed this woman during the 2012 campaign because she oozed entitlement every second of that time. She played the pity card with her MS, but of course it was in remission, and she had all the help imaginable, all the best medical care, and of course, dressage, and her faith, to get her through her little "health problem." Not to mention all that money...

I have several friends with MS, solid women in the middle class, who struggle, who cope, who raise children and work, and who do not whine when their conditions would send this Blond Bitch into a tailspin. So I feel absolutely no spark of sympathy for Romney's MS.

She is also amazingly tone-deaf to the concerns and the realities of women not in her circumstances, which means most of us, I think. All that comes across, to me, anyway, is smugness, privilege, and the painful attempt to make her marriage and her children--and her disease, don't forget that!--somehow relevant and meaningful to the rest of us serfs. I admit I read this--skimmed it, actually--because of my dislike. It was well and truly rewarded.

I'm not sorry about my dislike. It began when I heard about the family dog, and grew exponentially. If you want to read about someone overcoming an adversity, pick a real person with a real adversity.

Vgathright says

I just happened upon this book as I was walking in the library. I really enjoyed getting to know Ann Romney and learning about how she dealt with her MS. Having been diagnosed with fibromyalgia in my 20s I related a lot to her process of dealing with her illness, the depression, discouragement, fear, and finally finding answers and hope. Her illness is the center theme of the book, but she also goes back and weaves her life story throughout it. It's not amazing writing, but pretty remarkable considering she didn't have a ghost writer. I loved her vulnerability, authenticity and optimism.

Kirsti says

I decided to read this book because (a) I admire Ann Romney even though I disagree with her husband Mitt on almost every political issue and (b) I wanted to find out why she gut-punched her son Tagg that one time.

The punch story comes up on page 3. Ann and Mitt had five sons, and the boys didn't always get along, and one time Tagg (the oldest, then 16) was fighting bitterly with the second-oldest, and Ann tried to break it up, and Tagg started yelling at her, and she just lost it and punched Tagg in the stomach. Everybody was quiet for a few seconds, and then everyone except Tagg burst out laughing.

Ann uses this story to show that the Romneys have their ups and downs like every family, but to me this anecdote reveals what a sexist society we still live in. Can you imagine if a male public figure admitted that one day it all got too much and he punched his kid in the stomach? People would say he was a thug with a hair-trigger temper. They would look for patterns of aggression. But when a woman does it, it's just a funny story about a crazy thing that happened one time.

I was also disappointed by her tone-deaf comments about working moms. Of course she was upset when people said publicly that she'd never worked a day in her life. Being the mother of five boys is hard work! But she describes herself as a "full-time mother," as if moms who work outside the home completely forget about their kids while they're on the job. (I checked with my mom, who says she still considers herself a full-time mom even though I am a grown-ass woman.) And she says that during the campaign "there still was a stigma attached to putting your children before your job." Ann, most non-sociopaths consider their children more important than their jobs. Sheesh.

On a paragraph-by-paragraph level, this is a good memoir. But it's ultimately very frustrating because the structure is baffling, especially in the first few chapters. Ann ping-pongs from anecdote to anecdote and jumps around in time, which meant I had to work hard to try to figure out why I was reading about these incidents in this order. I don't think her editor served her well. Even adding chapter titles would have helped. As is, this seems like she "talked a book" -- in other words, that she recorded a bunch of anecdotes on audio, and her publisher transcribed them and gave them a light edit.

I was intrigued by her description of the Ann Romney Center for Neurologic Diseases. The center focuses on five conditions (MS, ALS, Parkinson's, brain tumors, and Alzheimer's) and tries to figure out if treatments for one illness will work for the others. It's a great idea and one that might prevent a tremendous amount of suffering. And then she has to go and ruin it by quoting Emile Coué, the famous quack of the 1920s. Coué's results were not scientifically valid. It is not possible to cure a prolapsed uterus by saying, "Every day, in every way, I am getting better and better." I wish it were.

This book has one unintentionally hilarious double entendre: "Some of our best times together were spent in the dark."

Christina says

Interesting perspective, though it was obviously ghost-written, particularly in the parts where the author seemed to equate living in Park City with living in Salt Lake City, when there is a pretty big mountain range separating the two. But I quibble.

I really appreciated the family stories told and the humor. One thing that stood out to me was Ann response when asked if she thought God had sent her M.S. because of all the good she's been able to do since having it (with her foundation, etc.) and she said she doesn't think God works that way and that rather, it was just one of those things that happened to her.

Carol says

This book was between a 3 and 4 for me. I found it really informative about MS and hopeful for new treatments. I have a lovely new friend who has MS and so hope that something can be done to stop the progression of the disease for her. I have so much respect for Ann Romney. She's not the greatest writer and sometimes I didn't quite get where she was going with some of her thoughts. But I found her story compelling. She's a tough lady.

Near the end it delves into lots of political stuff that I had a hard time wading through. Also, it gets more technical at the end with terminology and the intricate process of fundraising and research and establishing her center for Neuro Diseases in Boston. I like the personal stories better. But over all it's a good book.

Mimi says

I really enjoyed this biography. There were a few parts that I thought felt repetitious, but I read the book almost straight through, so perhaps it would have felt more like emphasis rather than repetition if I had spaced out the reading more.

Her battle with multiple sclerosis was really interesting, as was reading about the toil of politics on the family.

Excerpts.

"Somehow I had to justify the fact that while so many of my contemporaries were shattering the glass ceiling, I was home scraping Marshmallow Fluff off our boys."

"The fact that we don't fight is sometimes comical. In the late 1980s, I bought Mitt a used BMW for his fortieth birthday. That car is still in the family, and he loves it. He has always treated it with great care; it was one of those cars that he would use only when the sun was shining. Unfortunately, I drove the car one day and left the sunroof open; I forgot all about it. Naturally it rained that night; it rained a lot. In the morning I was in the kitchen with the boys when Mitt came storming in. There were about four inches of water in his car. He was so angry that smoke was coming out of his ears. 'Who did it?' he said to the boys. 'Which one of you left the sunroof open?'"

The boys looked at each other, assuming one of their brothers had done it.

I said, 'Oh gosh, it was me. I'm so sorry, Mitt.'

He looked at me and said brightly, 'Oh that's okay. It'll dry out. We'll take it in and get it fixed.'"

"I pretty much recognized in Margo the same streak of personality that I have: This is what it is; you can do it or you can't do it. You can spend all day wishing but you'll get a lot more accomplished with one minute of doing."

"Taking up riding had made a fundamental difference in my life. Instead of wishing that I would die quickly rather than be devoured piece by piece, as I had been thinking only a few months earlier, it helped me learn to live with my disease."

"I believe life is almost indiscriminate. Life happens. It hits us the way it hits us, and then we can choose to do with that reality whatever we choose. I don't see it as being part of any Grand Design. I don't think that God had a hand in this, that He reached down and decided, I'm going to make Ann sick and someday she's going to have a larger impact. But what I do believe is that we each have to play the hand we're dealt, and that life is a lot nicer for all of us if we help each other tote that heavy bag of rocks. The hope is that each of us can find a small niche in which we can make a difference."

Annette says

Quotes:

"I believe life is almost indiscriminate. Life happens. It hits us the way it hits us, and then we can choose to do with that reality whatever we choose. I don't see it as being part of any Grand Design. I don't think that God had a hand in this, that He reached down and decided, I'm going to make Ann sick and someday she's going to have a larger impact. But what I do believe is that we each have to play the hand we're dealt, and that life is a lot nicer for all of us if we help each other tote that heavy bag of rocks. The hope is that each of us can find a small niche in which we can make a difference." (p. 218-219)

"I'm the ultimate late bloomer. I got pushed into places I didn't want to go, but because of that, I grew. It was when I got put in a very uncomfortable situation that I realized, maybe for the first time, how much strength I had." (p. 220)

Renee says

Above average for political memoirs. She comes across mostly approachable and humble. I'm not aligned with her politically or religiously, but I didn't find myself bothered much by that in this book. About half of

the book focuses on her struggles with MS, which is something that does affect people in my life, and I found that part well-written. She's open about being happy about being a mom and not interested in the economy or foreign affairs, and I respect that she seems to know who she is and what she cares about. Her relationship with Mitt is really pretty adorable.
