



THE LONG GOODBYE

Memories of My Father

PATTI DAVIS

WITH A NEW AFTERWORD BY THE AUTHOR

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"Genuine and heartfelt."--*San Diego Union-Tribune*

Ronald Reagan's daughter writes with a moving openness about losing her father to Alzheimer's disease. The simplicity with which she reveals the intensity, the rush, the flow of her feelings encompasses all the surprises and complexities that ambush us when death gradually, unstopably invades life.

In this moving and illuminating portrait of a woman and her father, Patti Davis describes saying goodbye in stages, helpless against the onslaught of a disease that steals what is most precious--a person's memory. "Alzheimer's," she writes, "snips away at the threads, a slow unraveling, a steady retreat; as a witness all you can do is watch, cry, and whisper a soft stream of goodbyes." She writes of needing to be reunited at forty-two with her mother, of regaining what they had spent decades demolishing. A truce was necessary to bring together a splintered family, a few weeks before her father released his letter telling the country and the world of his illness. She delves into her memories to touch her father again, to hear his voice, to keep alive the years she had with him.

The Long Goodbye: Memories of My Father Details

Date : Published October 1st 2005 by Plume Books (first published 2004)

ISBN : 9780452286870

Author : Patti Davis

Format : Paperback 205 pages

Genre : Biography, Autobiography, Memoir, Nonfiction, Politics, Presidents, History

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Lesli says

The back of the book says Biography, but I'm pretty sure its a memoir. Not much straight fact, mostly feelings and emotions. That is the official classification, right?!

I read this book because I thought it would be more about Alzheimer than it was. The book is about Ronald Reagan's daughter coming to terms with the disease and her the relationship she made with her father. Alzheimer's runs in both my and mine husband's family so I thought this was a must read for me. Even though I enjoyed the book be warned this book has very little to do with the degenerative disease and all about a grown woman forgiving herself for the bridges she burned with her parents. But like I said I did enjoy it, it was quite interesting since I was a wee babe when Reagan was in office I know very little about the man, and only what my textbooks taught. I thought Davis was very well written and conveyed her raw emotions eloquently.

Suzanne says

Heartbreaking. Real. Raw: A devastating visit into the journey of a father's descent into the wicked world of Alzheimer's.

What I find most intriguing of Davis' journey is how relatable it is. She speaks to the reader, not as a First Daughter of one of the most powerful and beloved presidents of our time, but as a daughter, like any other, who loved her father completely albeit complexly, like so many of us.

Just when Davis has bulldozed me with profound insights and lyrical prose, I find myself knocked, once again, clear off my feet with yet another mind boggling, perfect string of words not only one paragraph later.

"When people leave they take their private, personal mysteries with them--candle flames of happy memories, the broken bones of sad ones. They leave, and it all goes with them. The rest of us are left in darkness with questions we never got around to asking, words we were just about to say but couldn't, because we got there too late."

After many pages of swallowing the figurative lump germinating in my throat, this next passage would become my undoing. It was in reference to an antinuclear rally Davis attended in 1982 (at the tender age of 29). Reverend Jesse Jackson had the floor and shared a firestorm of disparaging thoughts of our president. Determined to show her support for the cause she held so near and dear to her heart, Davis took the stage soon after. Years later, she would hear from an onlooker "My first thought when you came on after what Jesse Jackson had done, was, She really must hate her father'."

I found myself closing the book, if only momentarily, to have a good cry when I read this quote. I know Patti Davis did not (nor does she) ever "hate" her father and I cannot fathom the agony she felt when hearing those words. Words that have clearly left an indelible mark on her conscience. We have all done and said things we regret. Things to hurt our parents whether through our actions, our words, and in many cases, both. We can all relate. We understand her. We could have done things differently. Better. Without all the pain and anger.

From forging a new relationship with her grieving mother, Nancy, to desperately wishing to clear the murky waters of politics and the past with her sweet father who was slipping inch by inch, day by day from her grasp, Davis' struggle is real, her pain palpable throughout these pages.

While the late President Ronald Reagan will forever remain close to many of our hearts as Americans, as humanitarians, the daughter he so cherished, Patti Davis, has carved out an unforeseen and uncharted territory in our universe and should be known for not only her father's legacy (which she will be inextricably bound to for all her days) but for her own determination, longevity, and perseverance in the face of inner turmoil and family strife.

As one of the loudest voices for animal rights advocacy today, this exquisitely unique and tender-hearted human being exists as one of the most inimitable writers and authors of our time and should be celebrated for those sweet contributions, if nothing else.

****Also highly recommend: THE EARTH BREAKS IN COLORS by Patti Davis

Cyndi says

I think Patti Davis did a good job of telling her father's story and some of her mother's through President

Reagan's journey of Alzheimer's without it being a tell-all book. The minute day to day details are not there and I don't think they have to be. This book is about how a family changes as a loved one goes through this disease and it is a long goodbye. We lose small things about the person until they finally dissolve into another life.

I enjoyed her memories of her father and also thought this book was about redemption for her previous memoir that was not kind to her family. Loyalty is not a trait that Patti Davis can claim. But I tried not to focus on the author and more of the subject as I am going through the journey also with a parent.

T.C. Misfeldt says

Ronald Reagan's daughter shares the heartache of losing her father to Alzheimer's. As someone who met the President on several occasions, it helped me with understanding how the disease can take away someone you love and the grief a family...and a nation...dealt with.

Kelly says

I loved this book! I love her writing style. One thing that is for sure, Patti inherited her father's ability to evoke emotion. Some of her passages were so beautifully written I had to read them over and over again. I truly love President Reagan, as a child of the 80s he was the first president I remember. After reading this I understand his greatness even more and see him through the eyes of his daughter. The picture on the cover is perfect. You can see the kindness in his face with his head slightly tilted and a twinkle in his eye. I also appreciated Patti's candor, she was at times brutally honest about how she didn't agree with her father politically. I was appalled at how she went out of her way to not so subtly rebel against her parents and the Country that her father loved fervently. Her anger confused and angered me. Didn't she know she had wonderful parents? An idealistic childhood that most would envy? Why the anger? I don't think even she knows. But ultimately it's her father's fatal disease that is the lifeline that bridges Patti back into the loving arms of her family. Wounds start to heal, words of apology and acceptance uttered as her father cognition slowly slips farther and farther away. Patti even admits that she starts to soften a bit. She realizes that there are more important things than their political differences and instead of the disease tearing the family apart it brings them together, which is how her father would have wanted it.

Pat says

This book is a good read for anyone who has a loved one that has Alzheimer's. Sometimes you cry. The author gives a personal account of her life with her father as he is living with Alzheimer's. In this book she writes "Alzheimer's snips away at the threads, a slow unraveling, a steady retreat; as a witness all you can do is watch, cry, and whisper a soft stream of goodbyes." I think this quote sums up the book quite well

Christine says

This book is heartbreaking and heartwarming at the same time. Patti Davis seems to have really been on an

intense personal journey over the past decade or so and is the better for it. I always wondered what it was like for her to have a father who is so beloved by so many; to have to share him with the world. She describes her experiences beautifully.

Reading this book will make you want to work things out with whatever loved one you're having issues with because, really, life is so precious and short. My heart ached for the Reagan family throughout this book but it's definitely one of my favorite books.

Kelly says

Beautiful story of how age really changes our perspective and how if we put ourselves aside for a minute and really see and try to understand others around us, how we will be enriched.

Annburnett says

A book about Ronald Reagan and his final days. It also brings more awareness to Alzheimers disease.

Thomas says

Very moving and informative story of family by the "black sheep" daughter of the Reagans. Shows that even extreme liberals have a hope someday of growing up.

Jean says

So very boring....

Dana says

This was a book I read through tears. It had nothing to do with Ronald Reagan, the president, but everything to do with a daughter watching her father battle Alzheimers. It was amazing to hear so many of the same emotions and questions coming from Patti that I asked myself many times. I guess when it comes to losing a parent, many of us experience the same feelings and have the same questions. Not an easy read for sure, but definitely a good read.

Anne says

This book had special meaning. Was always a big fan of Reagan. At age 10 I wrote him a get well card when he got shot. Received a personalized postcard back. It was sad to learn of what happened to him with

Alzheimer's. It showed the struggles particularly of his daughter Patty watching him slip away. The last chapter was particularly difficult showing his final days of being unconscious. My grandmother died of a lung disease in 2005. In the last 48 hours my Mom and I held a vigil at the hospital watching over her. She was unconscious following a stroke and heart attack. I kept imagining she'd wake up like Patty thought of her father.

"One day, when we reached the top (of the trail), wind swirling around us and the sky big and endless above, I stood on my tiptoes, stretched my arm up toward all that blue, and asked him, 'If I reach up really high, can I touch God?' He answered, 'You don't have to reach up. God is everywhere, all the time, all around us.'"

From that time, Patty realized that what her father said applied to him after he was gone. "I don't have to stand on my tiptoes or stretch my hand to the heavens. He is here. In every breath. In every moment. He never left. Just moved on. To a place where, as he always said, there is no pain or sorrow."

Heidi Miller says

What a lovely tribute from a daughter to a father. Patti's writing is beautiful. There were so many great lines filled with beautiful thought. It is also a testament of how age and life experience have the ability to refine and define us. Loved, loved, loved!!!

Olicraw says

Excellent, wish I could write a loving tribute to my daddy who also died of this dreadful disease.
