



I Walked the Line: My Life with Johnny

Vivian Cash, Ann Sharpsteen

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"I Walked the Line" is a chronicle of first love, long-kept secrets, betrayal, forgiveness, and the truth--told at last by Johnny Cash's first wife, the mother of his four daughters. It is a book that had the full support of Johnny Cash, who insisted it was time for their story to be told, despite any painful revelations that might come to light as a result. Many myths and contradictions regarding the life of Johnny and his family have been perpetuated for decades in film and literature. Vivian exposes previously untold stories involving Johnny's drug addiction, his fraught family life, and their divorce in 1968, as well as the truth behind the writing of two of Johnny's most famous songs, "I Walk the Line" and "Ring of Fire."

Supplemented by a never-before-published archive of love letters and family photos, "I Walked the Line" offers a deeper look at one of the most significant artists in music history. Here, fans and readers can experience the extraordinary account of love and heartbreak between Johnny and Vivian, and come to understand Vivian's dignified silence over the years. Through this elegant, revealing, and powerful memoir, Vivian Cash's voice is finally heard.

I Walked the Line: My Life with Johnny Details

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From Reader Review I Walked the Line: My Life with Johnny for online ebook

Bre says

I felt like this book was nothing more than Vivian trying to say "Look world, he loved me and June is evil". I definitely felt bad for her, being in love with and married to an addict like that isn't easy but I felt the book was overdone and exaggerated. And the countless letters just got redundant, we get it, he loved you too! I just felt the story was entirely too one-sided, nothing more than a childlike rant.

Karen says

Everything about this book just seemed wrong. For a start, her name is NOT Vivian Cash - she was married to someone else for 30-odd years. Then, when I flicked to the photos in the middle, the same photo appeared twice. Only about 60 pages of the book were actually written by her, the remaining 250 being love letters written by Johnny. And I am of the opinion that love letters should only be read by their intended recipient.

I don't think that I'm speaking from the viewpoint of a disillusioned fan either. Johnny Cash was very upfront about his screw-ups.

Despite her claim that she never stopped loving him, it all just seems to me to be the bitterest type of revenge.

Mfreeman72 says

Very little of this book is actually Vivian's story, that element of the book could be compressed into a well-edited pamphlet. Instead, it's mostly comprised of 240+ pages of his love letters from Germany, which I forced myself to read mostly to indulge my masochistic side. And let me assure you, there's NOTHING more painful to read than mooning love letters from a twenty year old male. Petrarcha, he ain't.

Let me save you the time of reading this book. In a nutshell:

1. He was sanctimonious ass as a young man.
2. They broke up because of the drugs and June Carter.

Bookworm says

I did not know much about Johnny Cash's first wife. It's been a while since I've seen "Walk the Line", so I don't think I was influenced by the Hollywood version of events.

Yet I felt VERY uncomfortable reading this book. The first 2/3 or so of the book are letters. I felt fairly uncomfortable about reading such intimate and personal letters, and actually got kinda bored after a while. When the book switches to prose, I felt REALLY uncomfortable at bitterness Vivian Cash still felt at the dissolution of her marriage. Although she has the right to her side of the story, it just seemed insulting to read such anger and inability to let go. Apparently she wrote this with the help of another writer, and quite frankly it needed more editing. It seemed she found some measure of happiness and peace in later life, but the transition was rather awkward and out of place.

I got this at a bargain price--I recommend potential readers do the same or just borrow it from the library.

Marissa says

Being a die hard Johnny Cash fan, it was a little difficult for me to read this and hear Vivians side to their story. I think Johnnys letters were cute but a little overpowering sometimes. If someone were to write me those kinds of letters I'd be scared rather than in awe. The kind of love he had for Vivian and June were very different and I don't believe for a second as Vivian says, that they would be together still after all those years had certain things not played a role in their lives. One thing that bothered me about this book was how she published it as Vivian Cash when it should have either been Vivian Liberto or Vivian Distin. That is probably just me being jealous, I don't know and I don't care. She blames a lot on June and when I've read Johnnys books and Junes books and they don't match up. Of course they can't tell Vivians side either but she can't speak for others like she does somewhat in her Part 2. It also seemed like she wanted to make sure people knew where credit went for certain things (mostly to her) and that they knew for important things in Johnnys life it was her by his side. I do feel sorry for her that things played out the way they did in her life but it doesn't change the way I feel about Johnny or June for that matter.

Jamie Leach says

Too many love letters and too much bitterness...even though she claimed not to be bitter. I get it because I am divorced, but you can't wait to write a book until all the key players are dead and then claim that you are right and they are wrong...

Amy says

I'm finally finished, hallelujah, thank ya Jesus. Honestly, the beginning & the end were just fine, informative & believable. But the letters....oh, golly the letters...they dragged on forever & ever. It was just lovesick mooning & it made me a little uncomfortable as they wore on & Johnny began to describe with more clarity what he had in mind for Vivian & her undergarments. It was a little sickening.

I agree with another reviewer on here that brought to my attention the handwriting changed from the

beginning photos to the ones in the end. Additionally, the dates of the letters show that there was no way their correspondence traveled that fast. In the beginning, Johnny wrote a later, & just FOUR DAYS later is responding to Vivian's answer from the previous. It's simply not feasible, as towards the end, it takes SIX DAYS for a letter to get from Germany to New Mexico. I would like to have read at least a few responses from Vivian, just to see if she encouraged his behavior. But on the whole, the letters could have been condensed drastically. Like, a fourth of them would have been plenty.

I do believe Vivian's side. But as with every story, there are at least three versions. Yours, theirs, & the truth. Vivian must have not been the perfect wife that she let on to be. No one is. But as we mature, we change. And Johnny's ideal of the perfect wife must have evolved from housewife to musician & traveling partner. I'm sure his home life bored him after the glamour of being a star.

I am left with many questions. Obviously, the girls had some sort of relationship with June or they wouldn't have been so distraught over her death...but to hear Vivian tell it, they spent little to no time with her & didn't care for her & weren't close to Johnny. And did she publish under Vivian CASH at the persuasion of her editor/ publisher? Because she hasn't been a Cash in a long, long, time. Additionally, she married as soon as the ink on her divorce papers were final. She said this was because she was afraid no one would want a divorcee with four little kids. I smell a SHRED of truth....but maybe their friendship wasn't quite so innocent as she lets on.

If you want a different version of what you've read of Johnny Cash's life, this is a mediocre read. I would recommend the first passages, pick no more than ten letters to read at random, then read the last. That will save you a lot of time & energy. ALSO, I paid ten good American dollars for this book (\$3.99 shipping). It's simply not worth it to me. Try to get it for \$3 or less. Wish I had.

Laura says

I seriously just didn't get the point. The first 200+ pages are letters from Johnny Cash to Vivian while he was in Germany. Then she writes about 100 pages at the end. She is really nasty to June Carter, not that that is shocking. But it was this weird thing where everyone else is to blame but her. It was just an odd premise for a book. It would have never been published if she weren't who she was. Regrettable read.

Jamie says

Wow... this book really impacted me. I really enjoy Johnny Cash's music. It makes me feel like when I was a kid and there are no worries. I absolutely loved the movie "Walk The Line" with Reese Witherspoon & Joaquin Phoenix. I had mixed emotions about how I felt about his first wife Vivian. The movie portrayed her in an uncaring, selfish wife type roll. After reading her book which had the blessing of Johnny & their 4 daughters, I have changed my perspective of her. What a strong woman to have gone through all she had and was able to get over the anger of a woman obsessed with her husband and eventually loosing him to her and drugs. That must have been extremely difficult while raising their 4 daughters. It has also changed my opinion of June. Things that she did, said and described in interviews were reprehensible. According to Vivian, June had told her flat out that she was taking Johnny from her. Now as a mother of two children, if any woman told me she was going to take my husband from me, there would be some major problems. In the book it also mentions that June would give interviews and make a point to say she is so tired because she is raising 7 kids. According to Vivian, they lived with her most of the time and visited Johnny & June in Nashville. I would be so peeved if some woman was saying she was raising my kids and it was a flat out lie. I really have a soft place in my heart for Vivian, for what Johnny & June both did to her and the four

daughters. I have a new opinion of June - homewrecker is definitely on the top. She is in the Angelina Jolie catagory according to me.

Rosemary says

This book was very confusing. On one hand, I want to believe Vivian's story of how things happened but maybe she was a little bitter? Then again, June had been married several times before marrying John so it makes it difficult to believe either story completely. I also think the media played a huge role in defining June and Johnny's relationship to make it a love story they could sell to the public.

Either way, my opinion of Johnny Cash is forever changed.

Wyked says

I was surprised by the resentment and bitterness Vivian Cash had toward June Carter Cash, even when she died...

It wasn't a bad read, I guess both sides of the story needed to be heard....

Sara says

I was super interested in this book, written by Johnny Cash's first wife. They corresponded for three years while he was overseas in the air force. There are always two sides to every story, and this is Vivian's chance to tell her side of their life together and their divorce.

This book is 80% Johnny's letters, which are intimate and fun to read at first. After a while they become repetitive and almost boring. They reflect a childish sort of infatuation that young lovers experience, and the desperation of being separated. To add to the frustration, none of her letters to him are posted, so one wonders why the intimacy is so one sided.

This is a classic case of two kids getting married young and struggling. If Johnny went into a normal career they likely would have stayed together. But he becomes a star, she's stuck at home with the babies. He gets on drugs and meets June. According to Vivian June outright "steals" Johnny. Well, I can see this happening, but in a way it was inevitable. The author blames it on the drugs, which I am sure contributed, but it was a larger issue than that - they were in two different worlds. Being on tour and being a performer, June was in Johnny's world. It isn't surprising they fell in love.

Vivian comes across as bitter, which, well, I can't blame her. I got a gut feeling she wanted to reproduce Johnny's letters to prove that she really was loved by him. She expresses frustration that June discusses her children in the press as her own. I have read June's book and Roseann's book and both seem to paint a good relationship between the kids and June.

I wish the book was more her recollections of her life with Johnny instead of just his letters and then complaining about how she was wronged. Yes, she was wronged, but what happened when they were together that didn't involve June? There is so much missing from the story. There are some great photos in

this book.

Unless you are a die hard Cash fan, I'd pass on this one.

Nicole says

I didn't read the letters part, which is actually probably worth it. (Though you have to ask yourself - how seriously can you take love letters from an 18 to 20-year old?)

As for the rest of it, I totally understand how Vivian feels betrayed and angry - it comes across loud and clear. OVER and OVER. I get that she wants her point of view out there - there's just not much of a point of view, except that June was evil, slight clarity on his addictions, and what it was like for her to be married to him. It's hard to reconcile her version of events after reading the CASH autobiography. It just doesn't feel like there's a point to reading this.

Cindy says

First, I would like to say that I had barely even known who Johnny Cash was or even heard any of his songs until the movie came out. With that being said, I was able to read this book from an unbiased view point since I have no pre-established loyalty or emotional ties to Johnny Cash or June Carter as individuals and/or their music. Furthermore, the only information I had upon starting this book was from the movie and I do not take Hollywood adaptations of "True Stories" very seriously (especially when they are produced by the main character's son who obviously wanted to glorify his mother's image). This is a story of love, devotion, hope, dreams, and devastation. I wish that Vivian was still alive so I could thank her for her courage and humility...both of which she had in abundance to share her life long secrets, painful memories, private love letters, and constant love and devotion to a man that wronged her in every way possible. At first I was a bit mystified (and sometimes bored) with all the love letters in the first three quarters of the book. However, after reading part two I now see the importance of the letters as they showed the growth and development of Johnny and Vivian's relationship, how they communicated, the promises they made (and broke) and the endearing devotion they shared to God and each other. Some reviewers dismiss the love letters because of the young age of the couple at the time, but I think people forget that this was a different time and place in American culture, and most young men and women got married right out of high school and started careers and families. The maturity levels of 18 year old's in the 1950's was well beyond that of an 18 year old today. Johnny even writes about the majority of his friends in service are already married. That was the cultural norm for that generation and they were way more prepared to step into adult roles than kids are today. Therefore, I don't think Johnny and Vivian's love letters are any less valid than mature adults dating/emailing/texting today. Furthermore, one could argue that Johnny and Vivian's courtship was much more mature, thought out, and grounded, than the extra-marital, drug induced affair that started the relationship between Johnny and June Carter. I would also like to argue that Vivian's pain was still very fresh and unhealed (even after 30+ years) because she was never able to remove herself completely from the constant reminder of her marriage that was stolen from her. Her children had to grow up without their father in their daily lives, Johnny and June were always in the media, and friends and family would tell her stories or updates throughout the years. Vivian received years of affirmations from Johnny that he would always be true to her and their love, be a good husband and father, and take care of her forever. This is the foundation upon which they built their marriage. One should also take into consideration that she was raised in a devout

Catholic home, and marriage is a sacred Sacrament...it never entered her mind that Johnny would not only break his vow to her, but to God as well. Those who choose to defend June Carter are sadly delusional. You don't have to read Vivian's story to know that June had 2 children from 2 ex-husbands and was working on her 3rd husband who was MARRIED! Even by today's more lax social standards, June's track record is extremely promiscuous and would probably qualify for a reality TV show on MTV! I do not blame Vivian for never fully forgiving June...it would be very hard for any wife to forgive the mistress who stole your husband, took credit for raising your kids, and publicly re-wrote your husbands history with you to benefit herself. I respect Vivian for her decision to keep her story private until the time was right for her, Johnny, and her daughters. Even in the end she was still concerned about others feelings before she committed to writing her story. I am still at an utter loss as to why the music industry chose to portray June Carter as the pure/innocent, God fearing, country girl who was just swept off her feet by Johnny Cash...the truth is always more interesting! BRAVO Vivian! And thank you for sharing your story!

Kristina Hoerner says

I was intrigued by this book which is the only time you get to hear Johnny Cash's first wife talk about her view on what happened in their marriage (she died in 2005). What a let down the book was. 3/4 of the story was the entire collection of love letters he wrote her while he was overseas in the Air Force before they married. Incredibly boring! The last tiny part of the book was an angry rant on why June Carter Cash was a wicked, drug-addicted woman who intentionally set out to steal away her weak husband. To the end, she had forgiven Johnny for being weak but had never forgiven June for what she did to her or her children.
