



## Toni Tennille: A Memoir

*Toni Tennille , Caroline Tennille St. Clair*

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Since bursting onto the scene in the mid '70s, the pop duo Captain and Tennille have long defined the sparkling, optimistic idea of everlasting love, both in their music and through their image as a happy and, seemingly, unbreakable couple. They were an irresistible pair to millions of fans all over the world, further underscored by the rousing “yes, we can!” gospel of their biggest hit, “Love Will Keep Us Together.” But underneath the image was an entirely different story that the fans never saw: a woman who fought a lonely struggle against the controlling and often bizarre behavior of her emotionally inaccessible husband. *Toni Tennille: A Memoir* is a visceral account of Toni Tennille’s life from her childhood in the segregated South to her thrilling rise to fame in the world of pop music to where she is now: no longer one-half of a famed couple, but a stronger woman for all she has experienced—both the good and the bad. Toni hopes that her story will help anyone who feels trapped in a toxic relationship realize that it is never too late to break away from it.

### Toni Tennille: A Memoir Details

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## From Reader Review Toni Tennille: A Memoir for online ebook

### E says

I'm sorry they were weird and sad. I really liked the pictures!

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### Robin says

An easy-to-read and fairly honest memoir that exposed the "ideal" marriage of the couple, which turned out wasn't so ideal at all. Toni wrote about her childhood and family, the rise to becoming a superstar in the 1970s, and what inspired her to record (and write some) the C & T hits, but the intimate portrait of her marriage and how she struggled to gain the intimacy with Daryl Dragon she so craved but which he couldn't give is what made this so compelling. The ending of her memoir was a bit rushed but at least she accounted for her life since demise of her superstar popularity, something that has been lacking in some of the current celebrity memoirs.

This was one of the better celebrity/singer memoirs recently published and do read if you like a behind-the-scenes chronicle of the music biz, especially in the 1970s. For another excellent female singer memoir, read Rita Coolidge's DELTA LADY.

And just a little trivial tidbit: Did you know that Toni sang back-up on Pink Floyd's mega-hit album, The Wall? It's true!

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### Louise says

Looking for something light, I picked this up. I didn't know much about the Captain and Tenille, in fact I thought they were a two hit wonder.

I was surprised to learn that they began their careers with the Beach Boys and had a TV show and that Tenille sang with symphony orchestras and played the lead role in a national tour of "Victor/Victoria".

Even if I had thought about them, from the lyrics of the two hits I knew (didn't know that the third big one, "Muskrat Love", was theirs) I would never thought their marriage was so cold.

I read this in two sittings and in this brief acquaintance with Tennille, I appreciated her simplicity, modesty, optimism and her appreciation for the good things in her life. As for "The Captain", his food theories reminded me of Steve Jobs and in his behavior made me consider he was not only abused as a child, but may be autistic.

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### Kim says

I wish you happiness Toni Tennille! I wish Daryl Dragon peace but you, i wish you happiness. Thanks for

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sharing your story.

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## Mediaman says

This somewhat sad book is a bare-bones telling of the career of Toni Tennille, with a lot of blame put on her ex-husband for her own bad choices or failure to stand up for herself. The facts of her entertainment years are here (records, TV show, theater, etc.) but there is not much to any of the stories that are told and some of it is so simplistic it's almost funny. She talks about having trouble driving home in the snow, with nothing else to the story. She complains about her allergies acting up when performing in a theater with old curtains. She says she should have read a contract before signing it. These are all common-sense, plain stories that don't go anywhere because she fails to be able to analyze herself and her failures. Then the last 20 years of her life are covered in just a few pages at the end. It doesn't make for much of a compelling book.

The only life she shows in the book are her constant slams against her musical co-star husband, who sounds like a man with some serious mental health issues. Toni has no trouble throwing The Captain under the bus at every opportunity, and instead of seeing her own inabilities to be a functioning, communicating adult, she quickly points out his flaws whenever any issues arises. He wants to eat health food and instead of her having the hamburger she craves she caves into his demands; he wants to spend all day in his separate bedroom and she says nothing about it--well, honey, just stand up for yourself! (Which she finally did a couple years ago when she divorced him out of nowhere.) In truth the more she tells his story the more she is condemning herself for failing to do her part in communicating clearly. He's a mess, but she's an enabler who becomes very passive-aggressive and ultimately I felt more sorry for him having to put up with her.

BTW, it's unclear what their physical relationship was like. Toni does talk about two men she had sex with, but says nothing about her relationship with her husband. It's kind of implied that they rarely, if ever, even touch each other. She needed to be more open in the book about the specifics of their relationship.

Her recollections are also suspect. In one case she talks about her interviewing her husband on her short-lived daytime talk show, where she complains that he babbled incoherently about nothing and barely said anything. I watched the clip online and it's just the opposite--he talked quite a bit, gave some very interesting answers, and she was the one who couldn't shut up to let him get a word in. Maybe her perky non-stop talking was the reason The Captain didn't talk more.

The book is worth reading if you wonder what was behind their image, and it's nice that this is one of the rare memoirs that doesn't have stories of drug abuse (she says others around them did it but the two of them never did), but ultimately it's as vacuous as the pop songs that were performed by the duo.

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## Terri Lynn says

I had been looking forward to reading about the music and experiences of Toni Tennille and learning about her life before she was part of the Captain and Tennille before her marriage to Daryl Dragon but her book included what I considered to be inappropriate personal information about Daryl Dragon that has led to ridicule and hatred toward this ultra private man. Toni tries to make out that she worked hard for 30 years of marriage to get the aloof Daryl to love her and blames it on some abuse by an unkind father but that is NOT what made Daryl the way she describes him. Though when Daryl and Toni were kids, teens and young adults 70 plus years ago, no one tested for it or even talked about it, Daryl Dragon clearly is autistic and has Asperger's. I can tell this from her descriptions and from my own personal experience with a daughter who is

an Aspie and with volunteering with the autistic- especially Aspies- for decades.

Before Daryl, she had pressed another man to marry her and when she couldn't make him be what she wanted him to be, she dumped him. When she met Daryl, he never showed any romantic interest in her, never said he loved her, never acted romantically, never held her hand or kissed her, never tried to have sex with her and never hugged her, turning stiff and uncomfortable in her arms. She hotly pursued him, convincing herself he needed to be fixed and assigning herself the job of fixing him. He got pushed into marrying her but nothing changed and he wouldn't even sleep in the room with her. This is typical Autism/Asperger's behavior.

Other behaviors further led me to understand that this is Asperger's. He is a musical genius. People with Asperger's can be music, math, or other type of obsessive geniuses. He did not want to look anyone in the eye. He was bizarrely obsessed with health and diet and exercise. My daughter is obsessed about veganism and exercises excessively 8 hours a day. At parties in their home, Daryl would walk out and go to his room without saying goodbye. He had to have things exactly in certain ways. He talked in a monotone. He didn't even socialize with friends and kept people at arm's length. Even now he only communicates by email and online. He didn't want to touch or be touched. This means no hugging, kissing, cuddling, handholding or lovemaking. He would say odd things to embarrass her when she made him do tv appearances. Their Captain and Tennille show ended after one year though successful because he refused to do silly skits and was uncomfortable with made to do that. She goes on and on and on and on describing this very familiar behavior.

It is her own fault that she pursued a man who was clearly not interested and tried to remake someone with a condition that is never going away. She still does not seem to understand what his real issue is. Oh, and when she decided to divorce him, she filed and didn't bother to even tell him though they lived in the same house. He found out ON CAMERA as a reporter asked him about it.

Though I was interested to read of her childhood and adulthood and her musical experiences, I cringed in agony for poor Daryl. The one thing people with Asperger's want most is privacy and she has invaded his for profit and as I said, set him up for humiliation and ridicule. She dumped him when he developed a neurological disorder and couldn't play anymore. He is now in an assisted living place.

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## **Laurie says**

I was interested in this book for 2 reasons. One was that I was a C and T fan when I was a kid and the other was that the therapist in me was curious about why a couple would divorce in their seventies. This book tells the back story of the relationship and tells the story of how a strong competent talented woman stayed in an emotionally distant (at best ), likely emotionally abusive relationship for year until she had the courage to leave.

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## **Barbara J. says**

### **Eye opening and wonderful!**

Never knew that Toni Tennille endured so much as a child, then as a major musical act. What a strong woman she was and is still! Instead of allowing her turmoil to shape her and determine her attitudes, she willed herself to be persistent in her belief that things would get better. How she lasted all those years in a

relationship that was so one-sided, while smiling in all those personal appearances, shows the steel in her.

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### **Peter Galamaga says**

I thoroughly enjoyed this book (audio/Kindle version). I grew up in the 70s and 80s and her story overlaps with my musical coming of age. Although some may view her treatment of her husband as overly negative, I think that Ms. Tennille gives an honest account of life with a mentally ill spouse in the years when mental illness was not openly discussed. She discusses her own battle with depression in an honest and inspiring way.

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### **Linda says**

Captain and Tennille were among my favorite musical acts in the seventies. I loved their bright, bouncy numbers, and the focus on keyboards in the arrangements. I lost track of them after A&M ditched the group, other than the occasional news item of Toni doing some solo project. I was distracted by drama in my personal life in 2014 when the news of Toni and Daryl divorcing hit social media, so it was a complete surprise when Toni's book appeared as a recommendation on a book site, evidently written to explain the end of their marriage.

I know that in any relationship, there's two sides to the story, and then there's the truth. But at this stage of her life, I don't think Toni has anything to gain by lying. She doesn't need anyone's sympathy or approval. For me, her version of events is borne out by lyrics she wrote decades ago, and the fact that her upbringing was in a time and a place consistent with a mindset of pleasing one's husband at any cost.

The most stunning revelation for me was that the reason they got married is because A&M records forced their hand, announcing that the couple had gotten married on Valentine's Day in a press release. It was a complete fabrication. A&M insisted that no one would buy records about being in love from a couple that wasn't married. Oh, yeah? Someone needs to explain the Carpenters, then. The brother and sister duo were A&M's top act at the time.

After 30+ years of putting up with Daryl's hypochondria, weird eating habits, and emotional unavailability, Toni describes what seems to be her very first act of passive-aggression. While making a salad to Daryl's strict specifications one day, the family dog grabbed a mouthful of greens from the bowl and ran. While the dog hadn't touched what remained in the bowl, Toni knew Daryl would consider that salad tainted, and started to throw it out. Then she realized that Daryl, who was holed up in his bedroom as usual waiting for her to bring him his meal on a tray, would never know if she didn't say anything. She served him the salad, and I was proud of her.

Toni read the audio version of this book, and her voice is as rich, strong, and warm as it was in 1975.

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### **Alarie says**

I can't give a completely unbiased review. I felt I had to read this memoir since I am a Tennille, the only Tennille in my state. When the Captain and Tennille made the top 40 chart, people began pronouncing my

name right for the first time ever! I'm Toni's fourth cousin. She (even Daryl) were gracious about meeting her Tennille cousins after a concert, and her father, Frank, got to know my brother through their shared interest in genealogy. On the other hand, I'm not attracted to celebrity memoirs. Maybe that balances my review a little.

I'd give the book 3 stars for writing, but 4 for content. For anyone growing up in the 60s or 70s, it should be fun to get the insider scoop on dozens of the musicians and actors who defined our pop culture. You may be surprised at which people Toni found great to work with or downright obnoxious. As a Southerner, I also related to how the Civil Rights and later Women's Movements affected Toni's world.

We can't assume that wealth and fame will bring happiness. You may close this book feeling a little more thankful for your own life.

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### **BJ says**

I really enjoyed reading this book. It was fun reliving The Captain and Tennille from back in the day, although I was sad finding out that there was something wrong with their "love story." I applaud Toni for finally having the courage to leave and grab some happiness for herself. It was years overdue. Engrossing story, excellent read.

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### **Mary says**

I've always been fascinated by the dynamic of celebrity marriages like Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, Burns and Allen, and Sonny and Cher, particularly when it was the talented partnership that created the stardom. Such is the case with Toni Tennille and Daryl Dragon, otherwise known as The Captain and Tennille. Nothing exemplifies mid-seventies, pre-disco music to me like their hits. Toni Tennille grew up in Montgomery, Alabama, with a father who had to give up a promising musical career to take over the family furniture business. His bitterness led to alcoholism and to financial ruin. The family moved to California, where Toni started a musical career of her own. She met Daryl Dragon when he was the keyboardist for The Beach Boys, and the two started their own act. Seventies pop music, while reviled now, was full of bouncy and catchy tunes, and Toni and Daryl's partnership caught on with the public. They had several hit records and a successful variety TV show, which featured a cheerful Toni and a baleful, serious Captain who was never without a hat. But behind the scenes, Toni spent her life catering to a cold and demanding Daryl, who never reciprocated the love she felt for him. She wrote song after song for him, hoping to break through the wall, but, as she stated near the end of the book, he never paid attention to the lyrics because he felt that the music was much more important. After enduring this for about 30 years, she finally decided she needed to leave, and divorced him. Their story is the perfect example of the entertainment industry promoting an ideal that can't be sustained, and a marriage that could not survive, even though it lasted for decades.

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### **P.M. Terrell says**

#### **Multiple Facets Shine Like a Diamond**

If you're looking for a tell-all book with intimate details, this isn't it. But if you're looking for a fabulously

written book with so many layers that pull you in and hold you rapt, this is definitely the book for you.

I could relate to Ms. Tennille's description of the Deep South with pearl necklaces, coifed hair, ugly racism and small town gossip. Though I lived in the Mississippi Delta almost a generation after she grew up in Alabama, her writing brought me right back to the water fountains for white folk and the nasty one for people of color.

There's the story of a family riddled with hardship, from her father's alcoholism to their financial worries; nothing is held back.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading about the music industry, from touring to cutting records, to their "overnight success " that was years in the making... To the television shows and acting.

Nothing is held back; there's the drug-infused parties and cocaine meetings (she never did drugs, and I could relate to that too, and being "too square"). There's the negotiations, the lessons learned, the price paid for fame.

There is also the glimpse into her husband's childhood, his mother's breakdown and his father's abuse, Daryl's obsession with food, medical ailments, his thinning hair, all those hats and monstrously large houses that they could not afford and she never wanted.

But most of all, this is the story of a woman who had the strength, the courage and the commitment to leave an emotionally draining existence as Daryl Dragon's wife in order to be true to herself. I had to wonder as the years slipped by, what her life might have been like if they had remained musical partners but never married... If she had succumbed to the mysterious stranger on the beach and it had led to more...

But I have a feeling this lady's life is far from over, and love might be lurking just around the corner. I sure hope so.

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## Lori says

This was written by Toni Tennille. She is pretty open about the life she lead. She did not always have that happy care free life one may have assumed. She grew up in Alabama she was from an upper class family. Her father was an alcoholic, { although he loved his family } since she lived in Montgomery, she witnessed a of the civil right movement and how the black people were treated.

She was married at first to a man she knew she should have not married. After her divorce she met Daryl Dragon. This part of the book about her marriage and relationship to Dragon was a big eye opener. I guess I assumed they had this loving happy Marriage, was not true at all. A good part of her relationship with Daryl Dragon was miserable. Dragon or the "Captain" part of Captain and Tennille, was a very controlling, moody. health nut everything his way or no way man. He would only eat a very few foods and it got more bizarre though out the marriage what he would eat and he expected her to only eat what he would eat. He was not social and she always had to apologize for his behavior. He could be down right mean to people. She goes into detail of what she had to endure from this controlling domineering man. after reading her memoir. I wonder why she put up with him for so long. She also shares about her career in the music industry. A good memoir. If you like her music, you may find her memoir interesting. I did.