



Married at Fourteen: A True Story

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A candid and startling memoir

"I started seriously looking for a husband when I was twelve. I'd had enough of being a child, enough of being told what to do. I was unhappy at school; I resented homework; I didn't get along with my mother. Having seen movies like South Pacific, Sayonara, and A Summer Place, I believed in true love. More than anything, I wanted Rossano Brazzi, Marlon Brando, or Troy Donahue to come rescue me from my childhood. I wanted to be an adult, to be free, and to be loved."

Married at Fourteen: A True Story Details

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From Reader Review **Married at Fourteen: A True Story** for online ebook

Cherise Wyneken says

Like Dorothy, being sucked up to Oz in a tornado, Lucy Lang Day's memoir, **MARRIED AT FOURTEEN** from Heyday Books takes the reader on a whirlwind flight as at the age of thirteen she tries to fulfill her dream of having a husband, a baby, and freedom from home and school.

The sixties were a time of upheaval for teenagers who advocated free sex and the book gives us an intimate look into that troubled era. The reader need not approve of the author's life style, but the candor with which she relates it is admirable. Eventually Lucy finds that like the Wizard, the boys she meets are nothing but hot air, not good husband material, still boys, only interested in making out, not making real babies. But her dream is as strong as her determination and she does end up getting married at fourteen. After two more unsuccessful marriages and having her first daughter, her wit and intelligence lead her to take a different tack, go to college, find work that is meaningful and which uses her good brain. Her description of the life she leads, including being a teenage mother, is fascinating and enlightening, especially to parents. Lucy's poetic descriptions take us right into the scenes where we live with her as she zigzags through traffic on the back of a motorcycle with a Hell's Angel type biker.

Like Dorothy tapping her red shoes and returning to Aunt Em and her original place in life, Lucy recalls her past, becomes reconciled with her family, and fulfills her dream with her fourth marriage, two daughters, and four grandchildren on whom she dotes. I praise this woman who was not afraid to reveal how troubled our children can get and I recommend her book.

Cherise Wyneken, a freelance writer and columnist at:
www.examiner.com/poetry-in-oakland/ch...

Alison Hart says

This memoir is a page turner. Lucille Lang Day writes with the heart of a poet and the brilliance of a scientist, revealing her challenges and triumphs from a teen mother to a respected scholar. She writes for all of us, searching for love and place with determination and vulnerability. This book is a slice of Bay Area life not to be missed!

Judy Wells says

I thoroughly enjoyed Lucille Lang Day's "bad girl" memoir precisely because I was her "good girl" polar opposite growing up in a California small town during the same 50 and 60s era. I often wondered what those girls in my school with huge ratted hair, elaborate makeup, and a fast reputation were actually like, and now I know! More importantly, I also learned that a willful, stubborn "bad girl" can turn her life around, using

that same determined energy to create a successful life as an adult woman. Day's accomplishments as a scholar (master's degrees in both science and creative writing and a PhD in science education), poet (many collections published), founder of a small press, and Director of the Hall of Health in Berkeley testify to her dramatic transformation. *Married at Fourteen* is a lively, instructive, page-turning read which will keep you asking: "What is that outrageous "bad girl" going to do next? I highly recommend it!"

Judy Bebelaar says

Lucille Lang Day's *Married at Fourteen: A True Story* is an adventurous girl's coming-of-age story, a heroine's journey. There is a little of Huck Finn in young Lucy, a plucky, smart and sassy rule-breaker who is determined to make her own way in the world—without the necessary resources, except for a good heart. Her quick wits often fill in for a lack of guidance from her parents, who love her, but don't provide her with support or structure. Just as often as Lucy's bright ideas work, they get her into scrapes. We watch her acquire wisdom along the long, sometimes dangerous, winding way.

Movies: *South Pacific*, *Sayonara*, *A Summer Place*, provide Lucy with her plan for escape. "More than anything, I wanted Rosano Brazzi, Marlon Brando, or Troy Donahue to come rescue me from my childhood. I wanted to be an adult, to be free, and to be loved." Many teenage girls watched movies like those, and dreamed, but Lucy sets out—at age twelve—to make the fantasy real by finding her husband.

Lucy is a beautiful girl, and she knows how to dress. One of the many pleasures of reading this book is her descriptions of the husband-catching outfits she buys at Montgomery Ward or Fredericks of Hollywood, or that she sews herself. She and a friend decide to dress identically, pretending to be sisters. One of their matching outfits "consisted of metallic gold stretch pants that fit like waist-to-ankle girdles, gold lame peasant blouses with elastic necklines that we pulled down over our shoulders, golden necklaces, dangling golden earrings, and shiny gold slippers."

Her parents try, ineffectually, to rein in their unruly daughter, who at thirteen has already spent time in juvenile hall. But her mother's way of reaching out is to take Lucy on shopping trips where Lucy finds the sexy outfits she uses as husband bait. Her father makes offers of weekend outings, which up until her hunting days were "a source of some of my happiest memories." But now Lucy is not to be deterred from her search.

The first husband she finds, the one she marries at fourteen, turns out not to be the prince she thought he was. Divorced at sixteen with a baby to care for, Lucy sets out again to find Mr. Right; her parents often babysit. She and her "sister" begin going to teen nightclubs, then to a bar on East 14th Street in Oakland, where they are never asked for an id. They chat with the bartender, are offered free drinks, and sometimes date the men they meet.

One man I went out with was about thirty-five years old, tall and angular, with dark wavy hair and an inscrutable expression. As we drove down East 14th Street, he told me he'd murdered his wife. I looked down at my lacy purple dress and thought, Great. I'm all dressed up for a murderer. fit to kill.

Lucy asks—and is told—how he killed his wife. His answer—he strangled her—is an effective self-taught lesson. You'll have to read the book to find out the end of this escapade.

The storytelling is honest. Lucy is no wronged heroine. She makes many mistakes. She's often selfish and stubborn. We sympathize with her parents even though they seem blind to her needs, and support their daughter when limit-setting or a good long talk would be more in order. But we also watch Lucy learn from every bad decision. In the end, she uses her intelligence and determination to change her life, eventually earning four advanced degrees and a Phi Beta Kappa Key as well as raising two daughters, mostly on her own.

Married at Fourteen is a heroine's journey complete with memorable characters, wild adventures, sad moments and funny ones, poetry, and even a ghost story. As poet and memoirist Adam David Miller says, *Married at Fourteen* is "both a cautionary tale and a tale of redemption." It's also a testament to both the importance and the power of compassion.

Judy Bebelaar

Cherie Magnus says

Making a play with sensationalism (the title, first line "switchblade"), this is yet another memoir of a selfish, self-involved, spoiled, incredibly lucky person. The story is badly organized, jumping around in time and place, and is hung on the pins of one man after another--seemingly the only important thing in life to the author. She mentions in passing her conversion to Judaism but not how or why. She marries at fourteen to get away from her mother, yet she leaves the raising of her daughter to her mother while she searches for yet another man. She's intelligent and earns several degrees but doesn't seem to have a career. Unfortunately this book left a very bad taste in my mouth.

James LeCuyer says

Married at Fourteen shows rather than tells, so much so that the narrative voice beautifully matches and incorporates the voice of the fourteen-year-old Lucy, and that's a very difficult trick to bring off—finding the balance between the two points of view and matching each to its appropriate voice so that I (as generic reader) never lost the sense of being right there with teenaged Lucy and enjoying every thought and move she made and not wanting her voice to become adult. I can't think of anyone who has done it better. I think the tone of *Married at Fourteen* can be compared to the tone of *The Diary of Anne Frank* in that it gave me the feeling that I was smack inside the mind of a young, rebellious, very real girl.

L_manning says

Married at Fourteen is the autobiographical story of Lucille Lang Day. The first half is a fairly chronological telling of her life including marriage at 14 and a child at 15. The second half of the book is a series of intermingled tales from throughout her life. Through it all, Lucille has to navigate some very hefty stuff much earlier than most girls must learn these difficult last lessons. Some of the lessons take much longer to learn, but ultimately this is a story of triumph and self-discovery.

This book was so interesting. Lucille decided very early on that she had an unhappy home-life, and that the best way out of it was to get pregnant and get married. I think life for her was probably very rough growing up. It seems like her mom needed more help than she was getting. I found it both a bit fascinating and sad that Lucille became so convinced that marriage and a child were her ticket to freedom and happiness. Clearly in hindsight she can see how warped this thinking was, but she was certainly single-minded as a teenager. Her tenaciousness was very apparent through her life. Whenever Lucille decided to do something, Lucille did it. Whether it was getting multiple degrees or finding true love, she rarely wavered from her course. There is something to admire in that.

While at times things were a train wreck, this ultimately became a story of success despite the odds. With all the less than desirable decisions Lucille made at different times, I really feel like she ultimately was able to find her own happiness. There's a lot to learn from that. Everyone has messy lives to some extent, so we have to decide what we are going to make of it. Lucille decided that she would be successful. There are a lot of wonderful things to learn from this book. It will make you think and perhaps even find renewed vision to do all the things you always wanted to do. In the end, Lucille did that. She didn't let anything get in the way of her dreams.

Book provided for review.

Belden says

MARRIED AT FOURTEEN

Lucille Lang Day's remarkable memoir, *Married At Fourteen*, is a breathtaking page-turner that will (Warning!) keep you reading far into the night. Part of the reason it's so captivating is that Lucy Lang was a wild young thang who lived a very edgy life in her teens. Even her parents seem intimidated by her. She won't let them fence her in. She parties with bikers. She smokes, drinks, does drugs, and has sex—and, as the title intimates, even gets married at a tender age. By the time she wants to get married her mother is happy to sign away permission in the hopes that maybe matrimony will settle her down.

It doesn't, of course. Even more adventures follow.

Written in a lean, spare style that allows the reader to step directly into the story, this book helped me get inside the consciousness of one of those "bad" girls my mother tried to steer me away from in my youth. Despite Mom's admonitions I was always fascinated and wondered what made them tick. Now I have a lot more understanding—and compassion—for teenage girls of all stripes. And I found getting to know the young Lucy a wonderful experience.

When I first met the author in the early eighties, I judged her to be rather controlled and even a bit prim. She had several advanced degrees, was about to marry a fellow poet, and had children. Yet I sensed that inside lived an adventurer who had the courage to try just about anything. Little did I know.

Until I read *Married At Fourteen*.

I recommend this book enthusiastically to anyone who's interested in teenaged girls, human nature, or the capacity of a bright person to mould her own destiny. More basically, it's a great story, a real story, a true story.

I was especially moved by Ms. Day's unsentimental presentation of the complexities of dealing with physical abuse by a loved one. With no hint of rancor or ideology, she deals directly with it as a fact of life—and finds a way to survive and prevail. This is but one part of the memoir in which I recognized in the author a quiet heroism.

This is also a success story, though not on the Horatio Alger model. The young Lucy is guided by a strong inner spirit and a refusal to be defined by others. She assumes that pretty much anything is possible—and so it becomes manifested. She moves from dicey early relationships to a stable mature one, from hating school to loving education, from accepting other's definitions of herself to becoming her own person. She does so through incidents she renders vivid with a poet's eye for detail. You feel, for instance, that you've really been to that biker's hoedown and just escaped with your life. I recommend that you buy and read this book as soon as possible.

Grace Fiandaca says

Day's memoir was a fascinating read; it was hard to put down. She came of age in the early 1960s in California. The social climate for women is in some ways, virtually unchanged. In others the story reveals the tightly defined expectations for girls and treatment of women of the not too distant past.

It is amazing how Day had all the odds stacked against her and made a lot of serious mistakes, yet still triumphs in her life. Her strong will and her drive to learn (even though she hated school in her early and mid-teens) give her the gumption to prevail through numerous personal obstacles.

Her candor about her own foibles makes her a person the reader can easily identify with; her unique and adventuresome life story is inspiring and a worthwhile read.

Her remarkable accomplishments in attaining her college degree, then I believe two master's degrees, and a doctoral degree are actually hardly touched on in the book. I would have liked to read more about that process, as well as her interesting choice of careers, which is barely mentioned. Day holds degrees in science (a master's degree) as well as creative writing and English.

She does include a couple of poems she has written toward the end of the memoir; her writing is excellent. Lucille Day is an extraordinary woman.

Alex Marshall says

This book came across my desk in a catalog of Independent Publishers. I read the excerpt, and was hooked. A fascinating view into a different time, and an amazing look into an extraordinary woman, for both good and less so. I happen to read this book right after the biography of Elvis Presley, *Last Train to Memphis*, which takes place during the same time period. I could see how our social mores have changed. Marrying really young back then seems to have been seen as unusual or eccentric, but not insane or criminal, which is pretty much the case now.

The author of this book, Lucille Lang Day, writes well and honestly about her choices and experiences. She has a really good memory of what she wore! And check out that hair, on the cover picture!

Antoinette Constable says

Antoinette Constable Review:

MARRIED AT FOURTEEN,
A true story, by Lucille Lang Day

The first line of this memoir, “I own a switch blade,” sets the tone for most of this book.

Truant and associating with the worse elements in and around school, Lucille Lang finds herself in Juvenile Hall, unable to forgive her mother’s “yelling, spanking and lies.” Relentlessly, the author tells us almost more than we care to know- though we can’t put the book down- about her destructive behavior, in which we easily discern more than flashes of intelligence.

What would have happened, we wonder, had this willful girl been understood and helped by her parents? Her father, who believed in her intelligence, took almost no part in her upbringing. His influence was insufficient for his daughter to grow up with an ordinary dose of teenage angst and rebelliousness.

It’s both refreshing and surprising to find out that, naively– but who’s not naive at twelve?—Lucille believes that marriage and motherhood are the keys to the freedom which adults possess, even though she knows that her parents relationship is not good. She’s a willful, directionless girl who buys into the fairy-tales message that the fair prince will come and rescue her, after which they both will live happily ever after. Just the ticket for a young girl who urgently yearns to leave childhood behind. She finds herself, a teenager, the mother of two little girls

When her male relationships or marriages don’t work, she concludes that she’d picked the wrong candidate. Readers might find the list of her attempts at liberation and her delinquency too complete, too detailed and depressing, especially considering she must ask her mother for help in raising her two little girls while she starts on the rocky road to changing her way of life.

I believe the author revealed the extent of her rebelliousness as a warning to girls since, in spite of disasters leading to dead ends at best, she eventually finds her way out of the labyrinth of her compounded mistakes, maturing by degrees, earning a PHD and other graduates degrees, finding gratifying jobs and an enjoyable marriage relationship. A woman with a big heart, she has forgiven her family of origin for their shortcomings, and finds joy with her daughters and her grandchildren.

You may object that, if this book is meant to tell girls that mistakes can be overcome and that the future can be bright in spite of the ill-spent years, then other successful women’s lives after disastrous teen years should be mentioned at least. I agree. But this book wasn’t conceived as a statistical treatise or anthology on rehabilitation and success. It’s the remarkably courageous and honest account (how many authors can make this claim?) of a woman who takes us along on the personal journey of her life, a life which can help angry, defiant young people believe in their potential, however humble or lofty.

High fives for Lucille Lang Day’s memoir.

Beth Gordon says

When a book has a main character who has personality flaws, it usually makes me have more empathy and understanding. But this book? It just gave me a headache.

I don't understand why the author wrote this memoir. Yeah, she got married at age 14. Not because she was forced to, but because she wanted to; she wanted to get away from her parents. Okaaaay. She didn't like her mother because her mother was plump and unstylish. Okaaaaay. She got pregnant right away, surprise surprise her marriage didn't work out, and guess who she relied on to help raise her child? Yep, the plump and unstylish grandmother. And who took advantage of the free babysitting and free room and board so she could try to find ANOTHER husband? Yep, the deplorable main character. And guess who made her 6-year old daughter find her own dinner because she was too busy trying to find a husband? Yep, the deplorable main character.

The learnings from this book are common sense (don't get married at 14, don't have a child at 15, don't treat your mom like dirt because she will be the only one there to pick up the scraps when you screw up your life, don't try to find your self-worth through men).

Serena says

Married at Fourteen by Lucille Lang Day is a memoir about a young girl who wants to grow up fast in the late 1960s, that she seriously starts looking for a husband at age 12. She's completely unhappy with her family life, particularly her mother, and with school. The story spends a great deal of time in the first section examining the numerous boys that Day dated and tried to have sex with, but it also spends a lot of time on her frame of mind for this behavior. She believes that marriage will set her free from the confines of her own family, allowing her not only to become a mother, but also make her own decisions. In addition to love and finding a way out of the home, Day is a typical teen in her need to break out of conformity and make her mark, which in her case meant breaking up the monotonous school uniform with her own style and obtaining a switchblade to make her feel more adult-like.

Read the full review: <http://savvyverseandwit.com/2012/10/m...>

Eileen Malone says

The title pretty much sets us up for the youthful recklessness and impetuosity to come, and it does come. The memoir unfolds as a most compelling story of a bright, beautiful girl who seeks love and adventure, which to her means flaunting convention, marriage and babies. So she starts seriously looking for a husband at the age of twelve. She is so willful and so fiercely independent, she actually gets what she wants by fourteen and becomes a teenage mom and dropout.

Photographs strategically placed throughout the memoir show a movie-star-lovely Lucille posing with dangerously handsome oh-so-bad boys. We clearly see what she saw. This is the story she begins with, unfolding in an upbeat, sometimes humorous, sometimes bittersweet manner, but always with a girlish sweetness spiking her brutal honesty.

It is also the story that flaunts conventional thinking that cautions against any good coming out of such an unconventional start. We learn that Lucille does, in fact, return to school to achieve high accreditation in arts and sciences and does, in fact, find true love with a gifted writer.

What I especially liked about this absorbing memoir was the transformation of Lucille's almost obsessive rebellion against her mother. As the author matures, she understands and accepts the fact that her mother loved her in her own way, a bit of a strange way, but nevertheless, it was love. And a most satisfying post-ending is achieved, as she too shares her experiences with her own daughters' contrariness.

I was amazed at her recollection of minor details of those times, of what songs were popular, what color lipsticks worn, the descriptions of the boys and girls and what they wore, ate, smoked. . then I realized, ah hah, Lucille Lang Day admits to having an extraordinary ability to memorize (a photographic memory?) and this is to the benefit of memoir writing at its most entertaining.

Judy Juanita says

Howlingly funny and deeply poignant. I picked it up and didn't put it down except for bathroom breaks. A great read and a great ride through one headstrong young life. Lucille Lang Day captures to the nth degree what growing up was like in Oakland, California, in the fifties and sixties, on the other side of East 14th St. I lived below East 14th St. which was a realtor's red line separating whites from blacks and Latinos. Day's memoir is a revelation into the turbulence and trouble a white adolescent encounters when she defies her parents and society. Determined that love would cure every ill in her life, young Lucy plows through a field of boyfriends. The author, using vivid imagery and roiling sense memory, lets all her daring deeds shine through and save her ultimately. As memoirs go, it serves as both a cautionary tale and a fairy tale. I love that Day's younger self learns the cautionary lesson through battling many elements of fairy tales, including the wicked (step)mother, knights in shining armor (motorcycles) and even dubious angels(Hells Angels),. A classic.
