



Tears of Rage: From Grieving Father to Crusader for Justice: The Untold Story of the Adam Walsh Case

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The host of the "America's Most Wanted", John Walsh tells for the first time the full story of the the 1981 abduction and murder of his six-year-old son, Adam. This is the heartbreakin chronicle of John Walsh's transformation from grieving parent to full-time activist -- and the infuriating conspiracy of events that have kept America's No. 1 crime-fighter from obtaining justice and closure for himself and his family. From the day Adam disappeared from a mall in Hollywood, Florida, John Walsh faced a local police department better equipped to track stolen cars than missing children -- and a criminal justice system that would work against him in unimaginable ways. Outraged but deteremined, he ultimately enlarged the search for Adam's killer into an exhaustive battle on behalf of all missing and abused children, beginning with his efforts to put missing children's faces on milk cartons. Today, John Walsh continues the fight for legislative change and public awareness, driven by his own personal tragedy. "Tears of Rage" is the story of a true American hero: a man who challenged the system in the name of his son.

Tears of Rage: From Grieving Father to Crusader for Justice: The Untold Story of the Adam Walsh Case Details

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Beth Ann says

extremely disappointed in this book. i thought it would be a book about adam but it was really a "look at me" of john walsh. look at who Ive become, look at everything Ive accomplished, I worked here, I worked there, I know all these famous people, I am so great, Im "high and mighty". WHO CARES ABOUT YOU! I did not even finish the book about halfway through when I couldnt over come the "look at me im john waslh" didnt end I stopped reading.

S. Wilson says

Don't ask me why, but John Walsh has always rubbed me the wrong way. That's the main reason I read his book Tears of Rage; if I'm going to have an opinion on somebody, I'd rather it be an informed one. Ultimately, that's the only difference this book has had on my opinion: it has informed it.

John Walsh isn't a bad guy, and it is undeniable that both his political movements and his television shows have helped people and changed awareness and legal procedures for the better. But despite all he has done, it's still hard for me to actually like him.

The first fifty pages or so of the book deal with his personal background and history, spanning from his childhood through the early years of Adam's life, and it is this completely self-indulgent section that really displays Walsh's personality. By his own account, he is street-smart, a tough and skilled fighter, a great athlete as well as extremely bright, has never known fear or a lack of confidence, has saved lives without even thinking twice about it, and has never failed in any endeavor that he has pursued. Basically, he's perfect. But what really bleeds through is that he suffers from an over-inflated ego that informs his self-centered world view.

This self-centered (bordering on selfish) attitude is apparent in stories related by him in such a way that you must assume that he doesn't see it himself. When Adam is born, for example, he is told by the hospital where his sick father is recuperating that he cannot bring the child into the cancer ward, at the risk of infecting the floor full of patients with little or no immunity left. Knowing only that he wants his father to see his grandson before he dies (which he would have anyway, as later they all go to Disneyworld together), he sneaks the newborn into the hospital via a fire escape, regardless of the risk he puts the others in the cancer ward.

Also, it is impossible that anything done by him or his wife could be wrong or ill-informed. When mentioning Adam's natural birth without the aid of Lamaze, he makes a point of saying "I don't even think there were those classes back then." Being 1974, the Lamaze Method was already part of a strong movement towards natal health, especially on the east coast where they were at the time. Later, for their second child, he states that she started Lamaze classes then, but only in her eighth month, when the fifth or sixth is when you usually begin. Nothing out of the ordinary there, right?

This self-centered egotism extends immediately to his son, whom he declares was the only perfect baby in the hospital. “All the other little babies, some were splotchy, others a little misshapen. Adam was the perfect little baby everyone was looking at.” Granted, every parent feels that his or her child is special, but by John Walsh’s factual depiction, it is quite possible the Adam, had he lived, would have been revealed as the Second Coming. Apparently, Adam did not share a single negative trait with the other dirty, filthy, and ill-mannered children that wander the planet. Everybody loved him and wished he were theirs, and all of their adult friends felt more comfortable talking to him than to other adults, because he was that well-mannered and mature and responsible and perfect. Blech. Some of his praise towards Adam also reveals a sort of class elitism, as he takes great pride that “Adam had sharp clothes. On the playground all of the other kids looked kind of scruffy compared to him.” It seemed important to Walsh that his son wore “not sneakers, but Top-Siders. And small Izod shirts instead of regular tee’s.” And let’s not forget about the Captain’s Hat, “...an expensive one with a black braid and a visor.” In the course of Reve Walsh’s description of the day that Adam disappeared, she makes mention of the hat at least three times, pointing out at each instance that it was “a nice one, not a cheap knock off version” like the other children wear. She even goes as far as to complain that this detail (among others) should have been used when the store attempted paging Adam.

The actual disappearance of Adam at Sears is, of course, the reason this book was written in the first place. It is also the main reason that I lose respect for John Walsh, as the one fact that he and Reve refuse to admit, to themselves or anybody else, is that they (or, more directly, she) are just as much at fault as anybody else. The simple fact is that Adam’s mother left him alone in the store for a period of time that, while she is unclear about (“I was gone a few minutes. Five. Maybe ten altogether.”), can logically be clocked at a good fifteen minutes by examining the list of things that she claims happened while he was from view. Also, during this time, she points out that she had made sure he was close enough so she “could have” peeked around the corner at any time to check on him, which of course means that she didn’t. Then, when she suddenly couldn’t find the child she had left alone in the store, she became frustrated and angry when her situation wasn’t immediately made top priority.

This may seem a bit harsh on my behalf, but anybody who works in retail can tell you that negligent parents frequently let their children run around stores unattended, assuming that it is the store’s responsibility to play babysitter and round up their strays. This is the same attitude that Reve (understandably, yet at the same time predictably and unfairly) assumes almost immediately when her initial concerns are not met with the utmost urgency. Walsh is quick to say that this is because his wife looked young. “She had on shorts, she was a woman, and she looked nineteen years old.” The truth is that they were reluctant to scramble at her bequest was because she was acting like your typical negligent parent. Walsh goes out of his way to imply that the store and the police were slow and unwilling to help, yet neither he nor Rev can recall who finally contacted the police (which would mean that the store did, and means that they certainly didn’t), and neither do they know who informed the media during the first few hours of the search (which would mean that the police did, and again, that they didn’t). Does this make them bad parents? Not at all. But their refusal to admit that others did take immediate steps them that they did not take themselves in order to help makes them stubbornly reluctant to share in blame.

When they eventually dropped the lawsuit they brought against Sears, they claimed that they did so because the Sears lawyers were going to drag their names through the mud, and so they dropped the suit to protect their family as well as Adam’s Foundation. I personally think the truth hits a bit closer to home: Sears was no more responsible for Adam’s disappearance than the mother who left him unattended for up to a quarter of an hour.

Another distasteful trait of Walsh’s is his tendency to use his dead son to win arguments. It is very evident throughout the book that Walsh has a short temper and a lack of emotional control, and in fact seems almost

boastful of it. And while I like a “man of action who doesn’t play nice” as much as the next person, I tend not to trust people who describe themselves as such. Walsh rightfully argues against the bureaucracies and politics that repeatedly impede him, but his arguments always seem to be punctuated with phrases indicating that it is not he that demands justice be served, but rather his innocent, brutally murdered son. Being the savvy advertising executive that he never tires of describing himself as, Walsh seemed to learn early on that while you can argue with a hot-headed activist, you can’t argue with a dead child.

Again, I’m not painting Walsh as a demon; he has done much good. I am also not implying that he is completely bull-headed. He is the first to admit that he wouldn’t have gotten a fraction of the media coverage he did if Adam were a lower-class minority child, and I completely agree with his criticisms of the psychics and religious fanatics that attempted to use the situation for their own advantage, and when he defends his wife against claims by the media that she didn’t act the way a grieving mother should, as if there is a right and wrong way for individuals to handle emotions with which very few of us ever (thankfully) have to contend. While he at times seems to bend over backwards to both slam the cops and FBI for bungling his son’s murder investigation at the same time he praises both agencies for the good they do, it never appears phony or heavy handed. And, unlike Jon Benet’s parents, both John and Reve were quick to cooperate when the investigators turned their attention to them, knowing full well that the quickest way was to eliminate themselves as suspects. I’m not out to get the guy. But when he talks about teaching his six year old son how to use a diving knife (yeah, that’s safe), and when he recalls the humorous story of when he left his six month pregnant wife alone in shark infested waters, I can’t help but feel a little contempt for him.

For the most part, *Tears of Rage* is a pretty good book, and tends to cover all of the bases. Just beware that it isn’t an objective view of the Adam Walsh case, but rather, one man’s crusade to tell his own story the way he sees it.

G.M. Burrow says

One of the most difficult books you will ever read. This is the true story of the 1981 murder of six-year-old Adam Walsh, whose head was found floating in a canal two weeks after his abduction. The rest of his body was never found. For over two decades, neither was his killer. Ottis Toole confessed to the crime but was never indicted, and he died in prison before he could be brought to court. This is John Walsh’s own take on his son’s murder, the handling of the case, and what the police should have done to bring justice to little Adam. The book is raw and traumatizing and will leave you shedding, with Walsh, tears of rage.

Laura says

I have all the respect and admiration in the world for John Walsh. He went through a horrific experience and turned it around. The capture of so many criminals and the rescue of so many missing children is truly amazing. The book is good in describing the horrors he went through, the incompetence of the Hollywood, Florida police during the investigation, and how he came to host *America’s Most Wanted*. I must say, though, that he comes across as one of the most arrogant men ever. It was distracting to me to have to read about how wonderful he thinks he is. I found it strange too, really. I would think losing a child would be so humbling. Regardless, it is a powerful book and I would recommend it.

Mary Horn says

This was a very hard book to read, what a tragedy. But what a wake up call , anytime , anywhere you have to watch your kids! John Walsh has become one of my heroes. To go through what he did and come out with such a good thing it is amazing. I think of people who think of sports people and movie stars as heroes, ha read this book and see what a real hero is.

Terri says

Out of such a tragedy has come so much change for victims, families, investigations and yes, catching the bad guys. John Walsh's story is one that is impossible to imagine and yet impossible to ignore. I walk from this book, thinking and questioning what has changed and what hasn't. I want to cry and I want to break something. It is an emotional, raw and honest book springing from something horrific. But I walk away with admiration as well.

Levi Walls says

Absolutely heart-breaking and yet extremely inspiring read

Tbone says

If you've ever watched America's Most Wanted you have to read this book. If you have kids you should read this book. Help us get an Amendment to the Constitution for Victims' rights. WE need it for America!

Tracy Lackey says

Alright...I agree that I am an awful, awful person for giving this book 2 stars. Yes, John Walsh's son Adam was kidnapped in 1981. Which is sad. I am a mother and I get it. I'm not surprised that people here and on Amazon give the book high reviews, but I truly feel that the general public would feel guilty giving it anything less than 4 stars, seeing as the author's son was KIDNAPPED and MURDERED yet he fought through the grief and is now educating the public. And I appreciate that. But oh. my. god. Could John Walsh be any more self-involved or egotistical? I think he was like that before his child was taken but afterwards - Holy Hell!! I have never, in my life, read any book, nevermind an autobiography, that is so "me, me, me, myself, I, I, me...I did this! Look what I did! I was famous! I did great amazing things! I know all these famous people! See how awesome I am!" About halfway through the book I got completely frustrated with it and ultimately skimmed that whole rest of the book because I just could not take Walsh talking about himself any more than referencing his accomplishments. I don't even really think what he did was all that great...I mean, he hosted a reality show in the 90's for crying out loud. Sorely disappointed. Walsh should be ashamed of himself.

Beth says

Ugh. What an odd book. On the one hand, it is the story of a heinous crime and the fact that it was so badly handled, which led to changes in the law to provide support for families of abducted children.

On the other hand it is the vanity project of a man so badly afflicted with narcissistic personality syndrome that I am surprised he could tear himself away from the mirror for long enough to write this.

John Walsh has to be one of the most unlikeable narrators I have ever read, fiction or non. He is so incredibly arrogant that it was agonising to read his self love at times. There were many examples, in fact a good 50% of the book is him praising himself in some way, but some of the worst for me were gems like "of course the police weren't listening to my wife, she was a woman, it was time for me, a man, to step in and be heard." I have literally highlighted passages of this tripe but I don't want to anger myself more by repeating them.

However, the story itself is horrendous and quite unbelievable at times, in the way that the Hollywood Police Department handled the abduction and murder of a 6 year old boy. It is just such a shame that this powerful story and the lessons to be learned from it are so obscured by the fanfare the author gives himself on every other page. I have found another book about this case which will hopefully provide more information and less arrogance on the subject.

♥ Marlene♥ says

Re reading because I am reading another book about this case.

I am fast forward reading so I do not think it is fair to give this book a new rating. I gave it 4 stars but did not write a review on bookcrossing so that is what this book is gonna keep.

First part of the book was very interesting but sad second part I did get annoyed by the author sometimes cause he was always talking how good he was.

Kelley says

I had no idea the detail surrounding the murder of Adam Walsh and what this family has gone through. Furthermore I had no idea the extent to which John Walsh made strides for this country. This book is heart wrenching and an eye opener.

Lashundria says

I read this book years ago. I was working at the Dollar Tree and it was one of the hardcovers that we had gotten in. My mother never missed an episode of America's Most Wanted and she had explained to me, at some point, that the reason he started his line of work was because of what had happened to his son. I remember getting the feeling while reading that there was not really enough effort put forth in the "critical

moments" of this crime. It was as if not enough, in my opinion, common sense was put forth.

Even though you know going in how the story ends, it is truly heartbreaking. I think I cried through at least 95% of it. I would have paid much more than the 1.00 price tag it commanded.

If you haven't read it, and feel you can stomach it, grab it and maybe pass it around.

Fishface says

This book tells you, in painful detail, why John and Reve Walsh became advocates for crime victims. The magazine articles, TV interviews and movie ("Adam") scratched even less of the surface than I suspected. One of the most heartbreaking memoirs ever written.

Fawn Krisenthia says

This is one of 1000 books I've bought over the years that I have been meaning to read. I don't know why, in my venture into reading, I chose this one to start off with, but I'm glad I did. The first chapter was a bit off-putting, what with all of John Walsh's bravado. You get a sense from watching AMW that he is a little over the top with aggressiveness and vigilantism, but when you read his words, it's almost overwhelming - dripping with hubris. By the second and third chapter, however, you forgive him and are even thankful that he is the way he is, because no human being should have to endure the pain and suffering he did. But since the horrible event did happen, it might as well have been someone as strong as John Walsh.

Things I found interesting: the absolute black and white, good versus evil way of John Walsh's story. Isn't it amazing (and other sad adjectives, but for me - almost unbelievable) that an infamous and notorious serial killer Ottis Toole would meet, and in some ways create, a driven and unfailing man like John Walsh?

I also found it interesting that he *hints* at how his wife's affair, which ended a short time before Adam was abducted, contributed to the fumblings of the Hollywood Police Dept in finding Adam before it was too late. And how, years later, John Walsh himself would admit to a sexual addiction - which in essence means that he was caught cheating on his wife and more than once. I cannot judge the Walsh's for this though; who can ever understand what impact your child's brutal murder has on you? For me, Walsh gets a free life pass. With the work he's done with the FBI and on the NCMEC, Code ADAM, the obvious good he's done with AMW, and even the (controversial) Adam Walsh act, he is an inspiration. He didn't just crawl into a ball and disappear within himself. He shows that no matter horrible a hand you are dealt, there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and there is a way to overcome and even make things better for humanity in the long run.
