



You'll Be Okay: My Life with Jack Kerouac

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“You have a unique viewpoint from which to write about Jack as no one else has or could write. I feel very deeply that this book must be written. And no one else, I repeat, can write it.”—William S. Burroughs

Edie Parker was eighteen years old when she met Jack Kerouac at Columbia University in 1940. A young socialite from Grosse Pointe, Michigan, she had come to New York to study art, and quickly found herself swept up in the excitement and new freedoms that the big city offered a sheltered young woman of that time.

Jack Kerouac was also eighteen, attending Columbia on a football scholarship, impressing his friends with his intelligence and knowledge of literature. Introduced by a mutual friend, Jack and Edie fell in love and quickly moved in together, sharing an apartment with Joan Adams (who would later marry William S. Burroughs). This is the story of their life together in New York, where they began lifetime friendships with Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, and others. Edie’s memoir provides the only female voice from that nascent period, when the leading members of the Beat Generation were first meeting and becoming friends.

In the end, Jack and Edie went their separate ways, keeping in touch only on rare occasions through letters and late-night phone calls. In his last letter to Edie, written a month before his death, Kerouac ended it with the encouraging phrase: “You’ll be okay.” It was from that note that the title of this book was taken.

You'll Be Okay: My Life with Jack Kerouac Details

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From Reader Review You'll Be Okay: My Life with Jack Kerouac for online ebook

Amy says

Edie Kerouac-Parker was married to Jack Kerouac from 1944-1946. Her memoir focuses on their time together in New York during World War II when he was a longshoreman and she worked as a riveter. They were actually married in prison when Jack was being held for his involvement in the Lucien Carr case.(Whose son, Caleb Carr wrote The Alienist) They were married so that Edie could get an advance on her inheritance to get Jack out, how romantic. They were only together a short time after being married, Jack was never a man who could be tied down. Edie was from a wealthy family and Jack was never comfortable with that. He decided that he needed to travel with his pal Neal Cassady and that was the end of the marriage. They both remarried, a few times, but always had a connection and reminisced of the days spent together with their beatnik friends in New York. I am adding On the Road to my list of things to reread.

KU says

I read "On The Road" back in college, but I don't remember ever reading about his wife. So, I thought this might shed some light on their relationship. It was good but not very entertaining.

Lindsay says

it was ok. nothing particularly new or interesting.

Lisa says

This has all the makings of a great book. The story of Kerouac, Burroughs, Ginsberg et al. during their early days at Columbia; the backdrop of World War II; a socialite from Gross Pointe who was there at the beginning; and even a homosexual love triangle of sorts, resulting in a scandalous murder. Really engrossing stuff.

Unfortunately, the creation of this book was mainly in the hands of said socialite, and she is not a writer. The writing is pedestrian and contains a lot of pointless detail about what they ate and wore, like a high schooler's diary would. Sentence structure is trite, punctuation is awful, and please, "phase" and "faze" are not interchangeable.

Worst of all, this book does something that seems nearly impossible: It makes Jack Kerouac boring. His is a lifeless and cardboard characterization. I learned nothing about him, and gained no understanding of him, in reading this book. Parker writes repeatedly that he held her hand, put his arm around her, nibbled her ear, as if the repetition will convince her that Kerouac really loved her. But the claim of true love rings hollow; for the most part, it's an emotionless story.

Still, I gave this three stars because many of the facts are interesting, particularly the information about Lucien Carr. I would love to read a novel based on that story. And "You'll Be Okay" is worth reading if you want to know all you can about the life and times of Jack Kerouac. But I was disappointed in how basically amateurish the writing is.

Gen says

i stumbled upon this while looking to replace my copy of On the Road. always interesting to read another person's perspective and experiences, especially from a woman's voice. could've used something more though, but not a bad read

Patti says

I could have done a little less with what Edie wore while she was at Columbia and welcomed a little more of what she thought.

All in all, this was an original take on that period in time. I really do think she tricked Kerouac into marrying her. It was interesting to learn more about the Lucien situation.

Brooke says

An okay account of the Columbia and Greenwich days before they were the published, famous, murderous, alcoholic, cosmic deadbeats I also fell in love with. Found myself wishing, as ever, that the womens weren't always cast as the salon, setting or muse but in her candid way Edie grew up to be a writer too.

Judy says

Edie Kerouac-Parker tells the story of her brief marriage to jack. These were very intelligent, yet troubled people. Jack's writing is great, but his life was a tragedy. Where would literature be without alcoholism and self-destruction?

Cassidy says

When On the Road was published in 1957, America was exposed to prolific beauty within the riveting tale. This tale of life, throughout its triumphs and tragedies, left the nation both inspired and bewildered. However, as with any tale, the story has many parts. You'll Be Okay is a heart-warming, eccentric tale of Edie Kerouac Parker's life with the legendary Jack Kerouac.

Lisa Zacks says

Loved this book! It provided an interesting perspective of the early years with Jack Kerouac. Yes, Edie Kerouac-Parker was not a great writer and was perhaps a bit "on the spectrum" and provided a lot of unnecessary details (like exact descriptions of what she wore), but she had an interesting life and was responsible for a lot of the introductions of members of the Beat Generations. I actually wish she would have gone on and discussed more about her life after Kerouac. I don't think he was the only thing that made her interesting. She came from a very prominent family in Michigan and I would have enjoyed reading more about that. On a side note, while reading this book, I also went to Lowell to visit Kerouac's grave and watched "Kill Your Darlings" and "On the Road". The Edie portrayed in "Kill Your Darlings" didn't AT ALL seem like the Edie that I've seen in interviews or wrote this book.

Kristen Morgan says

awesome, awesome, awesome...

Josh says

Interesting. Easy-to-read. If you're a Kerouac fan you should read this.

KOMET says

You'll Be Okay: My Life with Jack Kerouac is, for anyone with an interest in Jack Kerouac and the leading members of the Beat Generation group of writers and artists, a fascinating story of how they lived in wartime New York City during the early 1940s. Edie herself was married to Kerouac between 1944 and 1948.

I confess to knowing little about Jack Kerouac and not having read any of his books. But a couple of years ago, I went to see the movie 'Kill Your Darlings' which was centered on the college days of the earliest members of the Beat Generation: Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, and Lucien Carr, whose murder of David Kammerer in August 1944 - an old acquaintance from St. Louis who had an overweening attraction to Carr and stalked him - is at the heart of that movie. I enjoyed the movie, which reminded me of "You'll Be Okay", which I had purchased at BORDERS a few years earlier, but had yet to read. Now having read it, I enjoyed Edie Parker's reminiscences on an era (the 1940s) that fascinates me to no end. She made the New York of that time as she experienced it so tangibly real to me. Most of her friends were then in their early 20s and they wanted to LIVE and experienced to the full all that life afforded them. And as most of them (with the exception of Kerouac who had entered Columbia University on a football scholarship in 1940) came from affluent backgrounds, they were free --- wartime rationing and privations notwithstanding -- to live and work in New York, then as now one of the most colorful and exciting cities on Earth.

Thus, for its nostalgic value, I give You'll Be Okay: My Life with Jack Kerouac FIVE STARS.

Reid says

A must read for a fan, however sad. Another voice, another perspective, mostly focusing on their short dead-end relationship before *On the Road*. After a very short marriage, they separated and divorced, and both mostly lived with their mothers until death. We get an insider's view of his parents and sister, a few rare photos, her perspective of the Kammerer murder, and Jack's week behind bars instead of in them. We also meet the real Remi Boncoeur - Henri Cru, as he dated Edie before introducing her to his best friend, Jack. A lot of tragic lives and early deaths.

Francesca Russell says

The writing is rather clunky and amateurish, but Edie has the really unique perspective of being married to Jack Kerouac before he gained notoriety as a writer. Their romance in WWII era New York City while Kerouac was a student at Columbia evokes a lovely nostalgia and although its obvious that Edie perhaps remembers things with "rose-colored glasses", I still found myself caught up in their romance. It was also interesting to hear about Jack's life pre-"*On the Road*" and to see where some of his downfalls later in life maybe got their start.

Plus I'm a sucker for biographies, especially ones that are New York-based, so I enjoyed it very much.

(There is another biography called "*Off The Road*" by Carolyn Cassady, Neal's wife, that is VERY interesting - the woman's perspective on what was really going on during "*On The Road*" - which, I highly recommend.)
