

# BOOK REVIEW



## Gentle John My Love My Loss

By Helene Chung Martin

Reading a book about the death of a partner can seem a depressing pastime, but Helene Chung Martins' book about the death of her husband is far from that. Her skill as a writer is evidenced in the easy-to-read style she recounts the story of her husbands' illness, his untimely death and her own grief.

Helene Chung Martin is a journalist with the ABC's international service, Radio Australia, in Melbourne. In 1991 her husband John undergoes surgery for Colon Cancer, two years later on September 29th 1993, he dies. Helene's story not only recounts the final three weeks of John's life but also provides the reader with a rare insight into their life together.

Although a sad tale to tell, I found her story both interesting and moving as she retells some of their past experiences. Readers are taken into the mind of the author throughout the illness and death, inviting us into her thoughts, feelings, hopes, fears and memories.

Her story is probably one that many would relate to having experienced the death of a partner through cancer. To a newly bereaved person it perhaps has too much telling of their lives together, rather than specifically talking about her grief. And yet, in one sense, the book is about Helene's grief and the processes involved for her dealing with the death of her husband.

I'm sure those who read *Gentle John My Love My Loss* will both enjoy the opportunity to be part of this moving story and yet be saddened by another life lost early. This is a well-written account of an individual's experience with the death of a much-loved partner.

*Reviewed By: Priscilla Nelson-Feaver*