

Saturday

## MAGAZINE

Books

# Helene shares the pain of her loss

Helene Chung became familiar to Tasmanians in the mid-1970s as a reporter on the ABC's television programme *This Day Tonight*.

Before that she had graduated from the University of Tasmania and worked in Melbourne for Radio Australia and for three years as a freelance radio journalist in Singapore, Hong Kong, London and Cairo.

It was in Hobart in 1976 that she found the love of her life, John Martin, a lecturer in history in Geelong. They spent 17 devoted years together.

But in 1991 Martin underwent

his first operation for cancer. He died of the disease in 1993.

Helene Chung was devastated.

She has disclosed her intimate thoughts of the last three weeks of her lover's life, baring her heart and soul, in **GENTLE JOHN, MY LOVE MY LOSS** (Hill of Content, \$19.95).

This articulate woman fills in the picture with flashbacks to their life together.

It is a predictably harrowing story. She wrote it down as therapy for herself, and has published it to help others to face grief.

In the months that followed his



Helene Chung



John Martin

death, there seemed no end to the burning tears.

"I talk to him", she writes, "cry to him, joke and laugh with him for all that he has given and still gives me, and ask him for the strength to continue."

And she ends: "This, then, is my

tribute to John, my gesture towards life, an attempt through exposure to heal my wound.

"And if this becomes a vehicle to transport a few others some way in their own painful journey through grief, my tears will not have been in vain."

— NOEL SHAW