



## PRESS RELEASE

# HILL OF CONTENT PUBLISHING

Company Pty Ltd  
A.C.N. 004 623 812

86 Bourke Street  
Melbourne 3000  
Australia

Facsimile (03) 662 2527  
Telephone (03) 662 2282

## GENTLE JOHN MY LOVE MY LOSS

**A story of love, death and grief**

**by Helene Chung Martin**

Paperback, RRP \$19.95

This book is an outpouring of the heart by a journalist skilled in recording a story.

Helene Chung Martin felt compelled to write this after her husband, John Martin, died of cancer in September, 1993. She wrote purely for herself.

Months later, in April 1994, she was invited to participate in a live, lunchtime radio programme, on the subject, 'Stuck for words: What to say to someone who is Grieving'. The enormous response Helene received to her revelations of how she was coping with her grief convinced her, despite her continuing reservations, that her memoir should be published. As she concludes the Afterword, written a year after John's death:

'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.'

**GENTLE JOHN MY LOVE MY LOSS** is a moving narrative of a woman's intimate thoughts, feelings, hopes, fears and memories in the last three weeks of her lover's life. Readers are taken into the mind of the author, as the couple dash to hospital, believing that he will return home, only for her to watch him drift off into his final sleep.

Although overwhelmingly sad, this is a story of love and happiness, and is punctuated with passages of John's wit and wry sense of humour:-

- ◆ 'On that first drive together, John and I continued from Huonville through Geeveston, with the Hartz Mountains towering to the right of us, and then on to Dover, where we stopped for a leisurely lunch. After that, we proceeded still further south in order to visit the spectacular Hastings Caves. It was after we had emerged from the icy tour of the caves, with the guide's inevitable joke on how to distinguish the stalagmites from the stalactites, and were on our journey home that evening that we realised we were in love.'
  
- ◆ 'The sun was streaming in through the circular glass walls, as I looked out to the magnolia tree in the small courtyard garden John had nurtured for five years. I could picture him there, up on the step-ladder, guiding the clematis through the trellis, or simply standing outside, daydreaming by the Japanese anemones and the ageratum, with the hose in one hand and the tip of the thumb of his other hand in his mouth. I was at the kitchen sink, tapping on the window to let him know it was time to come in for dinner. Oh, how I would miss having to call him in for meals. How I would miss the sight of his napkin that always seemed to slip from his lap on to the floor. How I would long for those crumbs he left in the cutlery drawer and those finger marks he made on the bathroom mirror.'
  
- ◆ 'We used to chuckle over his first childhood recollection of a Chinese person. He was a laundryman in Hobart, named Mr Wah Shing. He used to mark each item which passed through his hands with a bold black Chinese character in Indian ink, usually in a conspicuous spot such as the front of a shirt. It could never be erased.'
  
- ◆ 'Shortly after mid-day, I had a light lunch of soup, salad and bread roll, which I ate flicking through the newspaper, still keeping my eye on John. Then I kissed him, and told him I was going to lie down on my mat on the floor to listen to a tape. It was while I was stretched out, with my body just beginning to loosen and relax, that I heard a nurse enter the room. I stayed on the floor, still listening to the tape, with my eyes closed but aware of both John and the nurse. Then I heard Trish's voice quietly call, "Helene". I was instantly on my feet, leaning over John, his head facing me as he lay on his right side. I kissed him and said, "Darling I love you," as the blood rushed from his face and he breathed no more. I began to cry uncontrollably. With my arms around him and tears running down my face, I repeatedly pressed my lips all over his now ashen face and sunken cheeks. My sweetheart was dead.'

**We would be pleased to arrange an interview with Helene Chung Martin. Please contact Monique Burns or Melissa Cocks on (03) 662 2282 or by fax on (03) 662 2527 to arrange an interview.**

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