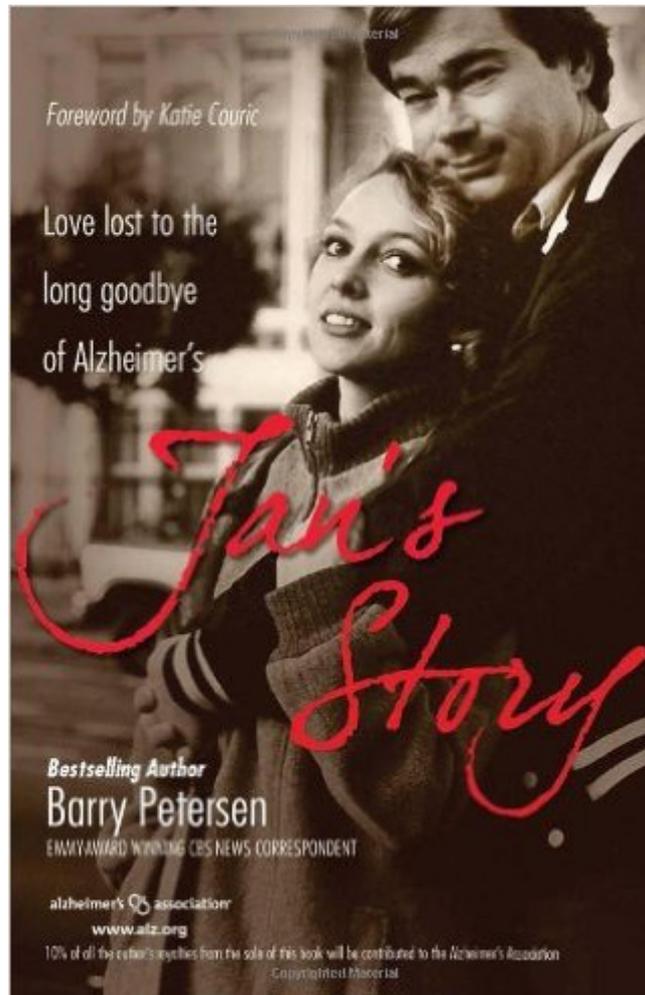


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Jan's Story: Love Lost To The Long Goodbye Of Alzheimer's



Synopsis

When CBS News Correspondent Barry Petersen married the love of his life twenty-five years ago, he never thought his vow, "until death do us part," would have an expiration date. But Early Onset Alzheimer's claimed Jan Petersen, Barry's beautiful wife, at 55, leaving her unable to remember Barry or their life together.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This story completely blew me away. Only time will tell, but it's my early pick for the most important book of the year; maybe the decade. That said, I'm certain there will be a profusion of outrage over it, and I can just see the reviews now: he's abandoned her -- he should be ashamed -- it's his story, not his wife's. But it is nothing of the sort; and anyone waxing judgmental, without walking a mile in the man's shoes, is the one who should be ashamed. For the record he has not abandoned his wife (who no longer recognizes him or remembers his name), but he has found a way to move on with his own life -- to avoid allowing it to be consumed along with hers, while at the same time doing everything he can, financially and emotionally, to support her in her tragic and incredibly sad decline that he is powerless to halt. Keep in mind that these people are still in their 50s -- Jan could linger on, continuing her relentless downhill course, for another 30 years, or more. Remember also that the incidence of Alzheimer's is increasing (no one knows why), and by 2040 there will be a 1:4 to 1:3 chance that you or someone you love will suffer from it. And there is no realistic prospect of a cure. And there is no evidence that there is anything -- anything -- you can do to prevent it. I can't

imagine how I would cope with a similar situation -- but what I really don't want to think about is how my wife and children would cope if it happened to me. If I'm afflicted, I'll be in la-la land, I won't care; but the financial and emotional and other effects on the people I love are things I cannot even bring myself to contemplate. There is no question, in my mind, that the real victims of Alzheimer's are the loved ones, much more than the patients.

In briefest summary, this book was written by a man whose beloved wife Jan came down with Early Onset Alzheimers when she was 55 years old. That man is Barry Peterson, who was an NBC reporter covering Asia. Because of his job he and his wife often traveled and had shuffled between various places to live. According to him they had an ideal marriage and if not for this horrible disease, he saw them staying together very much in love. Her coming down with this disease was devastating for him. Mr. Peterson mainly talks about his own reaction to his wife coming down with Alzheimers, and about the terrible toll a disease takes on the caretaker. I was very much in sympathy with him, and I found myself often shaking my head in agreement because my father has Alzheimers and the responsibility of his care fell on me. At the same time, when I picked up this book I did think it would be more about Jan. There are a few chapters that detail the various stages of Alzheimers and the author does describe Jan's decline, but this book is definitely more about him. Mr. Peterson clearly felt great guilt over putting Jan into an assisted living facility, and I can't help but feel that he spent too much time in this book trying to convince us, the readers, why he did that, and why it's okay that he would want to move on with his life. I think most of us reading this book would shake our heads in agreement over the choices he made, and he didn't need to repeat his reasons why. I think he still has to convince himself and that's a shame - he seems like a very good man who did the best he could. This is a horrible disease, and my heart goes out to anyone who loves or has to take care of someone who has it.

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