



Reader's Choice Literary Reviews

William R. Potter

A Healing Heart by Alberta H. Sequeira

When I first began reading *A Healing Heart* by Alberta Sequeira in September 2009, I had to stop after the first few chapters and put the book aside. Was there a problem with the writing or the content? No, on the contrary; the writing was so well done, the description so vivid that I was taken back to my mother's passing from cancer a few months previous. Sequeira has a wonderful talent for making the reader feel like they are right there in the scene...it was just too soon for me to be that close to so much sadness.

I returned to the book in January and found I couldn't stop reading. Sequeira introduces her family, the entire Gramm clan. The first few chapters focus on the relationship with her father, Brigadier General, Albert Gramm Sr. as she realises she doesn't know him as well as she would like. He was a quiet man who kept his emotions to himself, making it difficult for her to get close to him. Albert Gramm was the patriarch of the family; he took care of his wife, children, and watched out for the neighbourhood as well. He was greatly admired by the men who served with him in WWII with the 26th Yankee Division. He had great faith in God and he believed in miracles.

Watching Mr. Gramm become weaker as cancer destroyed his body was traumatic for the entire family. Alberta remained with her father, talking to him, massaging his muscles and giving him his pain meds for two weeks. Again, I felt like I was right there as Mr. Gramm fought to hold onto life as his grown children struggled to accept the fact that he was dying. Through it all, Mr. Gramm's faith was unshakable and he truly believed a miracle would occur and he would survive. Gramm's religious conviction was a great help to Alberta as she gradually accepted his passing and began to find her way back to prayer and her own neglected faith.

The memory of a family conversation about a village in Bosnia called Medjugorje would not leave Alberta. The obscure village a world away was said to be where six visionaries had daily visits from Our Lady. Alberta collects all the information about the apparitions and the village from local bookstores and dreams of visiting. Traveling to Medjugorje seemed impossible as she had a paralyzing fear of flying, a nagging heart problem, and other health issues. With help from a new friend, Alberta finally gains the courage to plan the trip. The problems would slow her progress but could not stop the fact that she felt that Our Lady had "called" her to Medjugorje.

The visit to Medjugorje can be called a spiritual awakening. Medjugorje is a place where believers need not make apologies for their love of God, for their need to have Jesus in their heart, and for praying. Alberta for so long has left prayer out of her busy life. In Medjugorje there is nothing to distract one from Jesus and His mother's teachings. Alberta meets four of the six visionaries, is present for two apparitions and makes a triumphant hike to the top of Cross Mountain in the middle of a frightening heart fibrillation.

Non-believers might find the book a bit preachy. For believers, especially those who have strayed from their faith, this book could be the key needed to open a door to a journey back to God. In a world that is learning how not to believe, disillusioned by church scandals, distracted by TV, the Internet, and a busy lifestyle, *A Healing Heart-A Spiritual Renewal* could be just what is needed to get those from all spiritual viewpoints back on track. Highly Recommended.

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