

**A Healing Heart Book Excerpts**  
**by Alberta H. Sequeira**

**Chapter One**  
**Miracles Around Us**

"Dad, do you believe in miracles?"

He turned, looking at me with a shocked expression on his face, "Of course I do. Don't you?"

It was a question he probably never expected a daughter in her forties to be asking him. With our strong religious upbringing, I could see he was stunned for a second with my asking.

"Yes, I do, Dad, but I wish we lived in the times when God was on earth and we witnessed Him heal with our own eyes," I answered.

He gave me a loving but disappointed look and then turned to put down the books he was carrying. Slowly, he placed them back into the living room bookshelves he had just polished. He had built the unit for my mother a few years back.

Once he completed the task, he explained, "Honey, there are miracles around us each and every day. We just don't take the time to see them. People are healed from terminal diseases when doctors had given them no hope, or a person walked when they were told it would be impossible. You can witness a mystical event without ever knowing how it happened. No one stops to realize these are miracles and that they come from God. You need to look, listen and watch more closely to things around you."

We shared this talk on a beautiful, hot summer day back in June of 1986. It was one of my many visits to my parents' home in East Falmouth, Massachusetts. Having had this personal conversation with my father, made me realize how unusual it had been. Our discussions, often than not, were amongst other family members.

The sun was shining directly through the large bay window in the living room and I could feel the warmth of it going through me as we stood there talking. I took life with my father for granted, never realizing time was disappearing and the moments left with him were counting down.

He was always in good health and very active at seventy-nine years old. Dad was not one for sitting around in front of television all day. If Mom did not have things for him to fix, he would find projects on his own to keep busy. It took him months to build a beautiful fieldstone fireplace all by himself in the back yard. He completed replacing and installing all the storm windows for their low level ranch home, and took pride with keeping the yard in flawless condition.

Albert L. Gramm, Sr. was a proud and distinguished retired Brigadier General, but to his children, he was just our father. He still had a solid physique and loved showing his strong, firm legs when he wore his summer shorts. Every outfit was matched and he never went anywhere without wearing one of the Cape Cod hats from his collection. He tried to hide his thinning gray hair by combing it to the side, giving it the impression of being thicker.

Dad was always a hard person for me to get close to because he never showed his emotions. He was a man of very few words. My father showed his feelings by never failing to give me a warm smile along with a wink when he passed by me, going from one project to another. One small gesture, and yet it made me feel so loved.

I acted no differently than him when it came to opening about how bad things really were during my marriage and after my divorce. These troubles were locked deep within and I never asked for help or advice from my parents.

Divorced and on my own, decisions were always facing me. I didn't want to throw any turmoil my parents' way. My four siblings often looked to Dad for advice on important matters. It was something that I routinely omitted to do. I had felt, if I was old enough to get married, I was old enough to handle my own problems.

I had three brothers, Albert (my twin), Bill, Joe and a sister, Leona. We ranged in age from our thirties to fifties, though Mom often remarked, "You'll always be kids to Dad and I no matter how old you all get.

I avoided the thought of Dad not being in my life. When the death of a loved one comes unexpectedly, or even with warning, we are still not as prepared as we think. When we receive news that someone we know has passed away, our heart goes out to the family left behind facing their heartbreak. After attending the funeral and sharing in their loss, we all go right back to our responsibilities with no distraction or upset in our daily routine.

The impact of death does not truly affect someone emotionally until it hits us personally. This is when we face how unfair and devastating the loss is. Our world comes to a complete stop from the reality of it...we are immobilized.

It is now October of 1990 as I sit in a rocking chair facing my father lying in bed, dying of cancer. He now needs a miracle like the one we talked about so long ago.

I had thought the death of either parent would be far distant, years from now. Mom was seventy-six and her mother was still living at ninety-five. Dad's father died of cancer in his late seventies but our father came across strong as a horse, never having any serious illness. The reality of his cancer was catching up with me and there was little time left to know about his life: not only as a father, but just as a person.

I wondered, how I had allowed all my years to go by without ever caring to learn who he was, and what he was all about. Who was he really besides a father, husband, and one who worked hard every day to support his family? He had to have had dreams. We all do.

I prayed as I watched him, asking God to help me find a way to heal my heart from being so selfish with my own wants and needs.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Facing Mortality**

Dad had received his chemo treatments a few weeks after his surgery. Leona told me the thought of having the procedure frightened him so much that he couldn't keep the first appointment, and had to reschedule. Our father had faced everything head on in life-except this disease. It had weakened all his muscles; leaving him helpless to get around anywhere.

I couldn't imagine what he was experiencing physically and emotionally. It had to be indescribable. No matter how many people were around him, he had probably felt alone. The expression, "We enter this world alone, and we leave it alone," is so true.

Watching my father in this slow, painful progression and not being able to do anything for him was a nightmare that was becoming unbearable. Day after day, this incurable disease was sucking the life out of him. I started to appreciate how precious life is and what an irreplaceable gift it is from God.

## **Chapter 23**

### **The Wake and Funeral**

Sunday arrived with the wake facing us. Mom was still holding up. We all gathered at the house waiting for the black, family limos to arrive from the funeral home. Leona's husband, Bob, closed the lumberyard so he could attend. Al was by my side giving me support.

When the two limos arrived, the family filled each car. They backed out of the driveway and my heart started to race. I didn't want to see my father in this state. We drove onto Rte 134 and came upon a traffic light that turned red: it was at the same intersection where I did my shopping the day before.

A car pulled along side of us on our right. I noticed a teenage boy tapping his fingers on the steering wheel to the beat of loud, rap music. The strong vibration could be felt in our limo. He seemed to have no worries in the world. I watched as the other cars rushed in front of us heading down into the plaza. I was amazed. My father has just died, my world has come apart, and no one notices or cares.

My life had stopped and I was amazed how the crowds were going about their everyday business with shopping. Nothing disrupted their lives, and they were too busy in their fast-paced world to even look over at us. For a moment, I wished for the impossible; I wanted to bring my father back into my life. It felt like I was never going to be able to laugh and enjoy life again. Was this heavy feeling in my chest ever going to go away? My heart felt as if someone cut it completely out of me.

## **Chapter 34**

### **Split**

When we landed in Zagreb, we had one last air travel to the city of Split. There was a forty minutes wait before we left. At 1:20 pm, our plane departed and a new world was about to open for me traveling to Bosnia.

The airport in Split was very small. It didn't take long to get our luggage. We went out the front doors to board the motor coach. About ten buses were lined-up in the parking lot waiting to take the tourists to their destinations. It was a three-hour ride to Medjugorje.

I studied the homes as we traveled through the countryside. There was very little conversation between Arlene and myself. I sat by the window and was content in the silence.

It was summertime now during our visit to this country. The view with the cattle and sheep roaming the open fields, had given me a feeling of stillness.

Children stood by the roadside, watching the buses pass by. As we looked back at them, they waved and smiled. Their clothes were very simple and plain, and it had me thinking about my clothes at home. They are packed so tightly together in my closet that I have trouble pulling them out. Why do we need so much?

I started to think about how much money I paid for this trip. Here were families that had probably never left home. So many will die never having seen the other side of the world, but will still be happy knowing God gave them so much. I believed their pleasures came from their family life, tending the animals, and working in the fields. I analyzed each sight as we traveled. I wondered how many people standing along the roadside had lost family members because of the war.

## **Chapter 35**

### **Arrival at Medjugorje**

Then it came into view...Medjugorje. The bus moved very slowly on the narrow dirt roads. No big resorts or hotels were visible. The private, stone homes were very close to one another. Contrary to what I expected, the village was not crowded. From the right side of the bus, Cross Mountain faced me. Of the things I wanted to accomplish on my

tour, one was climbing to the top. It was so far off, yet, it stood out so magnificently. To me, this was not any ordinary mountain; miracles happened there everyday. The huge cross placed on the very top was the famous landmark where so many miracles were said to have happened.

I tried to grasp the reality of being here. Months ago, I never expected the chance to share in this event. Every word I read in my Medjugorje books stayed in my heart, mind, and soul. It seemed so far out of reach to me back then. I had made it, and my feet were about to step onto holy ground.