

Someone Stop This Merry-Go-Round Book Reviews
Author Alberta Sequeira

An Alcoholic Family In Crisis

In Someone Stop this Merry-Go-Round, Alberta Sequeira tells the story of how her family suffered at the hands of her alcoholic husband. Having been in a three-year relationship with an alcoholic, I found myself relating to her experiences. Hers of course were much worse because he was in her life for much longer, she was married to him, and he was the father of her children. Unfortunately, she also had to watch them suffer from his actions.

My Master's in Counseling Degree covered a huge portion on substance abuse counseling. I found that I learned a great deal more by reading this story, than I did in reading textbooks. Following along with Mrs. Sequeira as she rode the merry-go-round with her husband was a huge learning experience. No matter what she did, she learned that she could not control him. The only control she had was over her own actions and choices. This was a painful learning experience for her because, desperate to keep her family together, she offered him many chances to pull it together, and he couldn't. Recognizing that alcoholism is a disease, she tried to get him help, but ultimately she discovered that he had to be the one to make that choice.

As the book concludes, she shares with us what it was like to lose him to the disease. Even though they were divorced at this point, she still loved him and she also had to watch her daughters suffer horribly as they watched him slip away.

Reviewed by Paige Lovitt for Reader Views (7/09)

Someone Stop this Merry-Go-Round is a must read for counselors, alcoholics and family members of alcoholics. I would like to think that this book would be a wake-up call for an alcoholic. Reading about someone who lost everything to the disease should be very sobering. For the families dealing with an alcoholic, they will see that they are not alone and they will also recognize the common patterns in dealing with a person with this disease. Hopefully this will also be a wake-up call to them to get out before there is a chance for violence to begin.

Ultimately it is up to each individual as to how they choose to deal with alcoholism. I honestly believe that if I had read Someone Stop this Merry-Go-Round by Alberta Sequeira years ago it would have encouraged me to exit my relationship with the alcoholic much sooner. As I read about the pain that Mrs. Sequeira experienced, it brought back memories of my own. Seeing how it only gets worse, it is truly motivating to get out now and let them get help.

I'm a recovering alcoholic with a couple decades of 24 hour periods strung together. Your book was a great read. It is not often we alcoholics get to see the damage from the loved ones position. I had some tough moments with some chapters

I have three daughters, one ex-wife and a current wife who could all benefit from this book and I hope they will each take the time to read it. Two of my girls have never experienced the alcoholic dad. My oldest (by my first marriage) was deeply affected by my drinking. I'm not worried about her becoming an alcoholic, but there are many other ways the behavior manifests itself.

I look forward to your next book. I'm sure it is tough to write and re-live the experiences. Please know it will be a huge help to all of us with loved ones that are so at risk of being sucked in to the disease and continuing the cycle of destruction.

John Castelot, WMS, Northeast Planning Associates, Inc

Once you read the first paragraph of her memoir, it draws you in like nothing you have felt before. Alberta Sequeira takes you on a personal and highly emotional account of her fourteen-year marriage to a man who struggled with alcoholism. Living in a time when personal problems remained at home, locked up behind closed doors, Sequeira labored daily to keep her family together. Her poignant and heart-wrenching tale comes to life off of the pages. You feel all of Sequeira's highs and lows with her husband as she intimately takes you on this merry-go-round ride that you won't soon forget. This memoir shows us the amount of strength that each one of us possesses.

Reviewed by Maureen Gaynor, Author, soon-to-be published, Always A Place

Alberta Sequeira's Someone Stop this Merry-Go-Round: An Alcoholic Family in Crisis delves into the heartache caused by alcoholism. Sequeira's story is a painful journey filled with honesty, hurt, confusion and a measure of hope. Mrs. Sequeira reveals the sadness and despair alcoholism places on those who love an alcoholic and the consequences that follow. Someone Stop this Merry-Go-Round: An Alcoholic Family in Crisis is a must read for those individuals or families facing or know someone who is battling this addiction.

Reviewed By Patricia Perry- Author
Quest for the Source of Darkness
The Fortress of Darkness
The Edge of Darkness: The Final Battle

Alcoholism is not just a disease of the man or woman who drinks. All too often it's a disease of the entire family, dragging the spouse and children of the alcoholic into either a chronic state of mental and emotional chaos, or a tense, uneasy calm while waiting for the uproar to begin its cycle again. And this is true whether the other family members drink responsibly or even not at all.

With enormous personal courage, Alberta Sequeira has written a memoir of life inside a household dominated by this disease. She unflinchingly describes her own thoughts, emotions and actions while she is in the grip of this destructive dynamic, and she's not an alcoholic.

She was born into a family free of alcoholism and reared by loving parents. Yet, while still attending high school in the late fifties, she was by her own admission already making bad choices, typical behavior for someone vulnerable to an alcoholic personality. Sequeira turned away from a fine young man in favor of Richie Lopes, who even at this early stage often smelled of alcohol when they would meet. The day they married, Richie refused to take part in the festivities of the reception, no dancing with the bride, no circulating from table to table to thank the guests and chat with them. But he did drink. Not an auspicious beginning.

Richie worked a night shift, and Sequeira survived during the day by having coffee with her girl friends. Richie continued to drink, which "put a wall between us." When their first daughter, Debbie was born, he was largely no help in caring for the baby.

The plant where he worked closed its doors, and he joined a small TV repair operation. He was soon staying out later and later after work to drink with his buddies. Sequeira was already beginning to regret her choice of a husband and letting that fine young man get away.

Richie's behavior became strange. Once, he locked himself in the bathroom when friends came over to play cards, he sulked behind the door, just as he had at the wedding, and those friends were soon declining the Sequeira's invitations. It became clear that when Richie drank there was a change in his personality. If it wasn't the sulking, he would change from his "normal quiet ways into a talkative funny guy, but then as he drank more, he became unpleasant."

After the birth of Lori, their second child, Richie started his own business, working out of their home, and he cut back his drinking. He finally told his wife about losing his father as a child, about his mother's alcoholism, and how his older brother worked, although under age, to keep the family together. Sequeira realized her husband never learned how to give affection.

The drinking soon resumed, however, and the disease followed a predictable, tragic pattern. Sequeira found a motel key in her husband's pants pocket, and entered a phase of self-pity and stony silence. There was no communication in their relationship. Richie's alcoholic mom babysat for them one night, and drank herself into a coma that left the

untended children at risk and actually required hospitalization. An attempt at therapy by Sequeira failed. Her family doctor put her on tranquilizers. The police increasingly became involved, either by bringing Richie home or when they were called by Sequeira or the neighbors because of a domestic dispute. All of this was interspersed with periods of not drinking which sooner or later always ended with Richie drunk.

What saves these incidents from being sad but shallow melodrama is Sequeira's bone-honest recounting of her own thought patterns and her emotional responses to these excruciating situations. Her mind either pushes her toward finding ways of protecting herself and the girls from a man who has become increasingly violent when drunk, or wonders if this time he'll really stay sober and they can finally be a normal family. Emotionally, it's terror and, literally, fear for her life, interspersed with forlorn hope. Complicating the emotional side is her concern for her daughters, who in the face of all common sense wanted their father to be a part of their lives. This is normal in an alcoholic house, and understandable. Also, at times, very dangerous.

Even after Sequeira took action and moved herself and the girls out of the house and began divorce proceedings, her thinking and her emotions continued to circle around in a regular routine, from fear to maybe this time it will work. The merry-go-round of the title is an apt description. This leaves the narrator of the book trapped in repetitive pathological thoughts and emotions that prevent any kind of real growth. And this is also where Sequeira's honesty is at its bravest.

The one bright clear beacon in all this is Sequeira's parents. Once she finally made a clean breast of everything to them as the marriage was falling apart, they jumped in to help, financially and emotionally. Their unconditional love for their daughter and granddaughters was a fire to go to for warmth.

After the divorce was final, Richie still continued to visit the house, often drunk. It became obvious that his health was significantly deteriorating.

Still, life went on. The author met a fine man, a widower, Al Sequeira, and a relationship developed. Her older daughter, Debbie met a young man of her own and wedding plans began. But the younger daughter, Lori, still in high school, started to show some of the early behavior of an alcoholic.

And then Sequeira got word that Richie was in the Veterans Hospital, dying of acute alcoholism. Richie's girl friend, abetted by his family, kept Sequeira from seeing and talking with him, and achieving some sense of closure to a very traumatic segment of her life. Sequeira contrived to watch the funeral procession on its way to the cemetery, but it wasn't the same.

Reading this book is ultimately emotionally exhausting, but not as much as living it had to be. And the book itself constitutes a very courageous act, although it's not without its problems. The static character of the narrator has already been mentioned. This problem is reinforced from time to time by the use of italics to reveal innermost thoughts and

feelings. But as often as not, these internal asides only deal with regret over the past or wishes for the future, rather than dealing with present reality. Such misdirected energy in the face of intense emotional situations leaves a reader frustrated at the narrator's inability to grow and change.

But Sequeira's whole story isn't over yet, only the part that deals with her relationship with Richie. We still don't know how and when she married the man who changed her name from Lopes to Sequeira. Nor do we know what her younger daughter, Lori, and alcoholism have in store for her, though on the last page of her own emotional story, Sequeira hints that it's quite a saga.

Reviewed by Reader, Grady Smith