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Burnt Cookies



Synopsis

This a raw, passionate, heartfelt book absolutely dedicated to telling the truth about the harrowing life of a survivor of sexual abuse.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Burnt Cookies is an extreme eye opener for those of us who have never been in a position like the author. How someone who is looked up to and respected could manipulate a young man like this person did is incomprehensible. This book is a must read for every parent and young adult. The more we understand how these people operate, the more we can prevent this abuse from ever happening again.

If sharing a life that has suffered abuse in order to allow others to begin to repair similar lives is the purpose of this book BURNT COOKIES: A QUEST FOR CLOSURE, the author Arny Alberts has

succeeded. What prevents this book from becoming more than an autobiographical confessional is the manner in which Alberts has chosen to tell his harrowing story. Authors since Shakespeare's time have realized that tragedy becomes more poignant, more tolerable to read or hear, if the dark is relieved by light in places: comic relief in many ways heightens the drama and makes it more universal. From the first page until the last Alberts relates this life story of the effect of many forms of abuse from childhood to the present with such unrelenting angst that were it not for the curiosity he builds in his readership, the book would likely not get beyond publication. But there most assuredly are people who have sustained abuse similar to Alberts and if seeing in writing that they are not alone, then that is sufficient reason to make this story available. Alberts opens his first page with progress of his seizure disorder present since childhood. There is a point at which he decides unilaterally (not informing his family, his devoted wife Paula, or his doctors of his decision) to stop taking his daily medications that control his seizure disorder. This of course leads to recurrence of seizures at the most inopportune moments and Alberts attempts to compensate by abusing alcohol. Ultimately an old friend of his draws him into private conversation and shares a fact that is at the core of Alberts' lack of self esteem: from age 14 to 17 he was in a sexual relationship with his high school coach, a relationship into which he was drawn because of his naïveté, his strong Catholic upbringing, and his need for companionship from an adult. In this portion of the book Alberts writes very well indeed, explaining the progressive sexual involvement with Coach Cappelleri in a most sophisticated and credible way. But it is the surfacing of this submerged high school experience and all the fears of sexual identity that molded Alberts' response to life. Gradually he fights all his demons and brings the truth to light with his understanding wife and family and is able to step out of the descent into darkness, confront the past, and reach for the light that surrounds him today. There are strong moments of writing in this book, moments that suggest Arny Alberts may have more to say not only about this topic of sexual abuse but about other aspects of his life that will find an audience among fellow travelers. In that case we could hope that he will appreciate the need to allow his readership some moments of relief, because in doing so he will be able to write with less of a desperately and agonizingly whining voice and step into the field of pure literature - the ultimate indicator of a fine autobiographer. Grady Harp, August 10

Chicago's De La Salle Institute was a typical school for two young Irish Catholic boys like Arny and Chris Alberts to attend. It was a Christian Brothers school, a Burr Ridge based religious order. Arny was a talented athlete while Chris had been blessed with the brains in the family. Basketball, baseball, football . . . you name it, the kid was there, but Coach Cap was also there watching them.

The surreptitious watch came from practice. He was a man who knew just what to do to unsuspecting young men. He had a script, an insidious script he would play out many times in the years to come. No one knew about Arny's past. He was careful to hide his seizure activity, something his mother helped him with. He knew just what to do when they occurred. It was a dark secret he didn't want to reveal. He began to drink when he became an adult and learn to mix his booze with extra Dilantin, a potentially lethal combination. Alcohol neutralized his meds, but deadened his pain. Arny casually admitted to himself saying, "I was no stranger to the drink." (p. 21)

He wanted to dull his raging pain, a dull aching throb of a "monster" that could, would, and did strike him when he least suspected. The "monster" was a series of repressed memories. They began and ended with a man named Phillip Cappelleri. Arny's wonderful wife Paula, with whom he had two children, oftentimes became the brunt of his anger, had no idea of the demons her husband carried inside his soul. It wasn't until an old high school friend Pat Sierzega phoned and asked to speak to him about Coach Cap. The candid dialogue began to eat at him because "Old memories had been buried for fear of discovery, placed intentionally deep so that they would have no chance of being found." (p. 41) Cappelleri had sexually molested Arny, his brother Chris, and Patrick, but how many others had he destroyed? Arny began to feel like a whirlgig-beetle uncertain where his life would take him. Yes, there were many positive things in his life, but the demons of his past began to overtake him. He was soon diagnosed with depression and given Lexapro, but that couldn't take away his past, a past Coach Cap had stolen from him. The monster was still inside the school system many years after he'd left. Arny "wanted to cry and scream from the depths of [his] soul." (p. 80). This heinous dreg of the Earth had to be stopped. Would the men be able to do it? The statue of limitations had gone by . . . what could they do to save other young men who might fall into the clutches of a serial sexual predator? This jarring, candid exposé of a man who came to terms with the sexual abuse at the hands a trusted mentor will stun the reader. This is not a "cute" memoir, nor is it one in which a man probes the psychological and psychiatric motivation of someone who molested him. Arny Alberts memoir is raw and, in some sections, very graphic in his description of the abuse. At first the tale appeared to ramble, yet it was clearly a reflection of the distressed psyche of a man suddenly forced to confront a horrifying past, a past not of his choice or making. We're not looking at a book that will ever end up being a best seller, but this book simply reached out and touched my heart. This memoir provided a cathartic opportunity for one man, but also speaks to us of something that should never happen, but continues to haunt our young people. This is definitely a book that many, especially parents and educators, should put on their list. This book courtesy of the author in exchange for an honest review.

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