



Where Hope Begins: One Family's Journey Out of Tragedy-and the Reporter Who Helped Them Make It

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Make It Alysia Sofios , Caitlin Rother

When local television reporter Alysia Sofios was assigned to investigate the worst mass murder in the history of Fresno, California, the breaking news lead soon became something much more - a hope-filled relationship that changed the lives of both the young reporter and the survivors of an unimaginable crime.

Where Hope Begins: One Family's Journey Out of Tragedy-and the Reporter Who Helped Them Make It Details

Date : Published September 15th 2009 by Gallery Books (first published September 3rd 2009)

ISBN : 9781439131503

Author : Alysia Sofios , Caitlin Rother

Format : Hardcover 336 pages

Genre : Crime, True Crime, Nonfiction



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Patty says

This book was bittersweet to read. Bitter because of what this family had to endure for years and years. Sweet, because they overcame. I can not imagine living my life the way they had to. I wish them a whole lifetime of happiness and joy. They deserve it!!

Also, a standing ovation for the author, Alyria for having the compassion and courage to take this family into her home, when they had no where to go. I would hope I would do the same, but don't know that I would have the courage she did.

Joan Parker says

An unbelievable story of tragedy and hope and how one fine lady opened her home and her life to help a family in great need. Definitely a page turner! I couldn't put it down. Alyria Sofios did an excellent job writing this book. Highly recommend!

Gina Sandoval says

Tough book to read just because of content but def put you in touch with more of the families feelings and background. I was slightly put off by the fact that it was written by a reporter who happened to befriend and house some of the family when they had no where else to go. I felt like she was exploiting the family in my opinion but then again she probably got their ok to write book.

Lureta Whitewing-Porter says

First Rate

The perspective of a reporter who befriends a family following one of the most horrific mass murders I have ever read about. The psychological power this man had over his wife and children was astounding. I could only come close to comparing what a child in the jihad (raised to become soldiers and suicide bombers), as to the extent of brain washing they were exposed too. The father, Marcus Wesson is a psychopath and mentally abhorrent in ways one cannot fathom. As a reader of true crime, and as Professional, who has worked in child protective services I have never encountered sexual, physical , spiritual and emotional abuse to this degree. If one is to believe a person is possessed with a demon this man is a testament . The uplifting aspect is that families can heal..at least in this case the scars may be less visible.

Jennifer says

This true story begins with a flashback to the day that Marcus Wesson murdered nine of his children. The author, a report in California, overcame her journalist training and instinct to help three of the women from Wesson's family get back on their feet and try to find a "normal" life in the aftermath of the murders.

Sofios is a remarkable woman, both in her ability to act to help out the people that had no one else to help them and in her continued optimism. I was interested in her story and the Wesson family's story, but I find it difficult to believe that she could always be so positive. I also think that she does not really address the culpability of the law enforcement officials who ignored the family's plea for help before the fatal day and hesitated to act on the day the children were murdered.

I found myself wanting to skim more than read.

Sarah Reidy says

Full disclosure: I'm publicizing this book. On that note, it really is amazing. I read it in 24 hours. It is horrifying, disturbing, and hopeful, all rolled into one. This is the true story behind the Wesson family murders (the largest mass murder in Fresno, CA history) in which patriarch Marcus Wesson killed nine of his seventeen children (some of which are also his grandchildren - yeah, I know). But it is also the story of what happened to the surviving members of the family afterwards, and the unlikely bond they formed with a reporter who had been assigned to the case. I KNOW it sounds cheesy, but if you try it, you probably won't be able to put it down.

Emily says

I was so surprised by how much I loved this book. I absolutely loved the characters...though not characters, they are real people. I saw them on Dr. Phil. I was pulling for each one of them and hoping the best for them. It was moving and sickening and in the end hopeful.

Laura says

Intriguing and sad, this true story tells about the family of a convicted mass murderer. It gives some insight into what happened in his very dysfunctional family, and it portrays his grown children as the victims they truly were. After reading this book, I think it would be impossible not to feel sympathy and compassion for this family and admiration for the reporter who became such an important part of their lives.

Barbara Powers says

The family perspective was fascinating in this book, although I was frustrated with the family loyalty to a very sick man. The fact that it was non fiction, I couldn't fault the author for the storyline, because the story couldn't be told any other way. So many lessons in this book, of humanity and compassion on the part of the author in following her heart despite the risks, and how the behavior of 1 person and his treatment of others can play such a huge role in their belief in themselves and reality. I was hooked from page 1. I would love an update on how the family is doing today.

sylvia corley says

Change my mind

I shoulda read Hands of my father last because, this book made me feel a little different about this family,especially Mrs Wesson,it seems if thought they were prisoners of war.I was angry at first and couldn't understand how could they stand by that evil man side for so long,but reading this book I got a different understanding some what. If that's all they new, and that evil man kelp them in dark all those years,feeding that garbage about his make up religion,it so sad. Poor Elizabeth, I judge her so wrongly,he had a hold on her since she was eight years old. Her mother should be charged with something,how you let your child have a relationship with a grown ass man and when she turns up pregnant at 15 you sign for her to get married,its unbelievable. This was mess up family from the beginning. Let's not get into this homeschooling,we're there anybody checking that. This was a invisible family and nobody cared until it was to late.

Fishface says

A great read on a fascinating subject: the long-term recovery of a family from the effects of years of brainwashing, sexual abuse, a cultlike level of isolation from the larger world, serious religious weirdness and finally the murder of 9 children in the family in a single day. It's a great object lesson in not being too quick to judge people based on what you read in the newspaper.

Rachel says

Very interesting subject matter. I'm glad the Wesson family members are getting their lives on track. I don't really care much for Alyria's writing style though.

Eva Leger says

I have about ten books to review, some from months ago, that I should have reviewed right away. This is one of them.

This is unique because the author, Sofios, is a reporter/journalist who befriended the family/surviving victims of this crime. It feels honest - I think Sofios wrote this with honesty.

I'd have liked to have seen more photos. Normally the amount included would be the average amount but with a family of this size, and so many victims, the photos are small in number.

There are things I want to know that Sofios can't tell me. How did this go undetected for so long? Why do

people put up with this *in the beginning*? I get the whole 'brainwashed' thing. I even believe it in some cases. I don't know if I *entirely* believe it here. The kids? Probably. The wife? No dice.

No one can make me believe that the girls in the family, who were not even allowed to talk to their *brothers* and spent tremendous amounts of "alone time" with their monster "father" got pregnant and the mother didn't think it suspicious. A normal family the suspicion would fall on a boyfriend, lover, one night stand, etc. This family? No. By all accounts these girls were allowed to do nothing but worship this piece of shit. How would they get pregnant any other way?

The "mother" says often - and Sofios seems to buy it - that she "didn't know". "I just didn't know that Alysia." How? *Why* didn't you know?

IMO, 'not knowing' and 'not wanting to know' are two different things. A part of me hates to say this - I could never even dream of the pain this woman has gone through. But at the same time, it's me being honest. I do applaud Sofios for coming to their aid because if it's true, the state was only caring for those members of the family who agreed to side with the prosecution. As much as I wouldn't want to see any family members in this circumstance side with the defense, is that really a reason to leave them out in the cold? If you have the ability to care for the one side you have the ability to care for the others as well. To expand on that a little, I would think they'd have a better chance of making the family members "see the light" if they did open some sort of dialogue.

It bothered me on page 310 when the author mentions seeing on the news that Wesson's dirty ass dreads were hacked off. Hack the hair off. That's fine with me. They could hack his head off and I wouldn't care. It's what was done with it that bothered me.

According to the news report and Alysia the disgusting things were sent to Locks of Love. So, in the authors words, now they were allowing a 'bunch of little kids to run around with a mass murderer's hair on their heads.' And that's not even o mention how they cleaned it. I saw pictures and I'm here to say I doubt it could be done. That crap wouldn't touch my child.

There are other questions too - how did the officers outside the house not hear the shots? Is there a gun that quiet? Neighbors supposedly head shots, why didn't the people who were in the very yard of the house where these people were murdered?

I don't have much, if any, sympathy for Sebhrenah. I feel like I should but I don't. Other kids got out. Other kids saw that this wasn't right. How could she turn a gun on babies? On her own babies at that? All on the word of one single "human".

I don't have enough sympathy inside to have any left for her. I certainly have none for Wesson. I feel for the kids and babies who were brutally murdered and left in some sort of horrid pile. And I do feel for the remaining family members. Not for the two responsible for this atrociousness.

All in all it's written well. It doesn't have that journalist ring to it that makes books so hard to read for some people. The crime is unique enough to make it interesting for those looking for that also.

Cheryl says

Wonderfully and compassionately written, Alysia Sofios, a news reporter from Fresno, CA reports on the devastation that Marcus Wesson causes his family. A religious fanatic, physical & mental abuser of all of his 18 children (6 of which were conceived by his own daughters and niece), Wesson ends up on CA death row, where he remains today. After the "God" ordered slaying of 9 of the children, Ms. Sofios takes in the remaining members of the family and strives to learn how they had survived to this point and the journey to life without Wesson. A definite inspiration of love and "eternal hope".

DAISY DISNEY says

Very sad story. Marcus is a disgusting pig. He shouldn't even still be breathing after molesting his daughters and nieces. & Elizabeth is also to blame for turning the other eye. I will never understand why women allow this when they live in the United States. We are not in the 1700's or the Middle East where a woman can't speak up. Come on now stand up for your kids! It really makes me angry!
