



Book Review: *Sixty Five Roses: A Sister's Memoir*

By Lucy Gostwick

Sixty-Five Roses is a beautifully detailed account of the life of Pam Summerhayes, a young Canadian girl struggling to survive with Cystic Fibrosis. Written by her sister Heather Summerhayes Cariou, it tells of the birth of the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, set up by their father, and the family's ongoing struggle to cope with Pam's terminal illness in the latter part of the twentieth century. The memoir recounts, with great humor, the cherished memories of the sisters as well as the strains encountered in coming to terms with Pam's disease. In particular, it bears witness to the insufferable guilt experienced by the author as she grows up alongside a permanently sick sibling, and how this constantly affects her decisions in life.

Sixty-Five Roses – so called because that was the way the very young Pam pronounced the name of her disease – is a must-read for those with CF, offering hope and consolation as it charts every step of the disease from birth to death. Living in the days when CF summer camps were still much in evidence, the Summerhayes formed close ties with many families touched by CF, and inevitably watched on as more and more were bereaved. Pam resolved to learn from each of her CF friends, who taught her courage, wisdom and patience. Her biggest wish was to bring hope to others with CF – and in this she and her family ultimately succeeded.

The memoir is also essential reading for those whose loved ones suffer from CF, since it shows the difficulties posed by a terminally ill family member: the strain on the father, Doug Summerhayes, as he struggled to find the money to pay for Pam's medicines; the battles that his wife Donna went through to ensure that Pam kept up her regular treatments, and her efforts to keep the peace between the children; and finally the other siblings' quest for their identity in the face of such an ill sibling. The creation of the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, documented in this book, is a testament to the Summerhayes' determination to win over in the face of the disease; a portion of the proceeds of *Sixty-Five Roses* will be donated to the Foundation, and the foreword is written by the celebrity patron, Celine Dion. This gripping story covers every element of the family's life right up to Pam's death at the age of 26, encompassing the emotional bond of the two sisters, the treatments Pam had to take, including the mist tent she had to sleep under every night, her all too regular hospitalisations and her exemplary school work. Considering the fact that she was only given six months to live when diagnosed at the age of four, Pam Summerhayes defied every expectation and fought a long and hard battle. If she had been able to access the most up to date treatments, then no doubt she would have lived much longer.

Sixty-Five Roses is a profoundly moving tale of one family's enormous struggle against adversity. It captures the deep emotions engulfing them, and how they fought to master these feelings - through work, cleaning, tantrums or isolation. It shows how they never gave up on each other and never lost hope. To order a copy, visit www.amazon.com, Barnes & Noble stores and their website, as well as in your local bookstore.