

A woman with blonde, wavy hair is shown from the chest up, speaking at a podium. She is wearing a white top with a wide collar and a red AIDS awareness ribbon pinned to her left side. A black microphone is in front of her. The background is dark and out of focus.

SLEEP WITH THE ANGELS

A MOTHER
CHALLENGES
AIDS

Mary Fisher

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Mary Fisher

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Mary Fisher's Family AIDS Network, Inc., is a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing awareness, compassion and resources with which to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic in America.

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**To my children, who are my
inspiration and my motiva-
tion, and to your Dad, the
brightest star in your sky.**

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Patrick Fallon: Page 160.

Tina Campbell: Page 202.



Acknowledgments

The photographs and speeches filling these pages sample both my public comments and my private life in recent months. They may also offer convincing evidence that my children, Max and Zachary, occupy the central place in my life.

Speeches excerpted here were not originally written to be read in a book; they were prepared to be spoken to an audience. Most photographs were meant to capture personal memories. Now both are being published—which gives me the opportunity to name some of those who've helped shape what has become a publication.

Thousands of usually unpaid and unheralded volunteers, many active in local AIDS organizations, conceived, planned and sponsored events which led to speeches that now appear here. I cannot name them all, but if they had never asked me to speak—and encouraged me to speak candidly, most of what's written in the following pages would never have been composed.

From the first time my story was told publicly, my ability to pursue a mission of awareness and compassion has depended on a

Acknowledgments

fragile and seldom-acknowledged partnership with media: national, regional, and local. Without journalists and reporters to cover and retell the story with sensitivity and dignity, the story would have reached thousands instead of millions. Producers and editors who created space in broadcasts and on editorial pages, and then filled that space with a sometimes unpopular message, set a pattern which was more important than my few moments in their limelights. From an hour of joyful hysteria in a television studio in Salt Lake City to a moment of gripping grief in an art gallery in Florida; from stagehands at ABC who asked me to sign their wall to network anchors who encouraged me to "say it again"—the hardworking and sometimes maligned professionals known collectively as "the media," who've covered these speeches from city to city, have earned my appreciation and this brief acknowledgment.

Behind the scenes, friends and heroes have offered everything from loving criticism to extraordinary support. The name of Betty Ford is the first that comes to mind. No matter what the hour of the day or the issue at hand, she's been ready to offer wise counsel and steady encouragement. And then come other names: Jeanne Ashe, who has taught all of us about courage and purpose; Sally Fisher, who saw my naivete as a challenge and met it with strength and humor; Bob Larson, whose convictions and compassion are deeper than anyone may ever know; Dr. Henry Murray, whose concern for his patients is wrapped in love as well as science; and Dr. June Osborn who, when first she heard my story, swept into my life with hope and friendship.

As the pages of this book show, I hate the AIDS virus although I'm grateful for the meaning of my life. Finding and maintaining the balance between this hatred and this gratitude can sometimes be tricky. When perspective begins to slip, I've often turned to the members of my "AIDS family," exceptional people who share a

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passionate distaste for the virus that ravages our lives and the lives of others we love. Michael Iskowitz sends funny cartoons and insightful suggestions; Larry Kramer proves that integrity is something we have, not something others can give (or take from) us; Dr. David Rogers offers a wisdom and grace that redeem our worst days; Jeffrey Schmalz shows how to maintain vulnerability without self-pity—and the list goes on.

The discovery that we are HIV-positive tends to divide our lives into “before” and “after.” Some friends and family members bridged these two eras of my life with special grace: Joy Anderson and Joy Prouty, Henry Baskin and Byron Nease, Judy Sherman and Stu White, Kathie Durham and Anne Keating, Geoff Mason and Brian Weiss, and extraordinary members of my family—especially my parents, whose concern has been constant; my brother, Phillip, who shows his love in part by helping lead the Family AIDS Network and by helping me through the hardest hours; my sister-in-law, Tina Campbell, whose love for a dying brother never excluded Max or Zack or me; and my cousin Dr. Michael Saag whose pioneer research in Alabama may be the fountain from which the world’s first effective AIDS treatment flows.

Patty Presock lives by the maxim, “Do the right thing,” and has encouraged me and others to follow that same advice. Having given such wise guidance, she then gave us another gift, her daughter, Tracy, now working fulltime for the Family AIDS Network. Tracy, first in Florida and more recently in Washington, D.C., and the staff of The Greystone Group in Grand Rapids, Michigan, provide day-to-day staffing distinguished by flexibility, hard work and excellence. Fielding and managing everything from crisis telephone calls to faltering airline schedules, these colleagues have proven that a small group of people can, when

Acknowledgments

thoroughly committed to the mission, move a whole range of mountains.

Jennifer Moyer and Britt Bell lent more than the name of their publishing company to this effort; they poured themselves into the project. As it headed for press, they put my name and picture on the cover. But I think of it as belonging to them, and to all those named above. Most of all, I think of this book as belonging to my children. If it were not for them, I could not have the passion that has produced this book.

Without the contributions of two special colleagues, this book might have had its passion but not its potency. David Hume Kennerly—who persuaded me first to buy a real camera and then to risk, as an artist, publishing my work here—has won the Pulitzer with his photojournalism, my heart with his readiness to embrace each new day, and my gratitude for his help in shaping this book. And A. James Heynen, who came into my life like a gift of God, able to translate my soul (even when it is mute) into words that have stirred the souls of others. . .for him, I have no words.

To all of these—and to all those I should have thanked but could not—my gratitude. And, beyond my gratitude, my love.

