

Forget-Me-Not Spotlight
Slow Dancing with a Stranger:
Lost and Found in the Age of Alzheimer's
By Meryl Comer

A review by Shannon Nosbisch, C.D.P., co-founder of Effingham Area Alzheimer's
Awareness

Meryl Comer has served two terms on the National Board of the Alzheimer's Association, served on the 2008 Alzheimer's Study Group, is a founding member of USAgainst Alzheimer's Association and co-founder of Women Against Alzheimer's Network. She is now the president and CEO of Geoffrey Beane Foundation Alzheimer's Initiative. She has done all of this because for 19+ years she has cared for her husband who has early-onset Alzheimer's disease AND, eventually, she cared for her mother who has late-onset Alzheimer's.

This book is about her journey in caring for her husband and mother. She discusses her struggles with getting a diagnosis and the numerous decisions that needed to be made. Comer doesn't downplay any part of her life with her husband who had behavior issues with his dementia. She also discusses her problems with finances as she couldn't work because of being a full-time caregiver, decisions about moving her husband to long term care facilities and her lack of social life. The affect of her husband's disease on her son and his family is also discussed.

Comer states, "I have learned first-hand that there is no single solution to taking care of someone with dementia". Everyone who cares for someone living with dementia will have their ways of dealing with all aspects of dementia. There are no concrete solutions.

Her husband was a doctor and researcher at the National Institutes of Health and was on the international scientific circuit and traveled frequently in Europe to attend conferences and presented papers. His colleagues noticed some changes early on and thought maybe things were going on at home. Comer noticed

changes at home and thought they were related to work. It wasn't until her husband's boss called her that she realized something was truly wrong.

Because of her experiences in her own home with people she loves, she has become an advocate for Alzheimer's research and support. For some people who have been caregivers or family members of a loved one living with Alzheimer's, they don't want to discuss or be involved in anything to do with Alzheimer's, but for Meryl Comer, this is a crusade to discover a cure and support families, caregivers and people living with Alzheimer's disease.

This resource is available at the Effingham Public Library, Flora Public Library, Evans Public Library, Newton Public Library, Greenup Township Public Library, Shelbyville Public Library and the Mattoon Public Library in the Forget-Me-Not Resource Center. If you do not have a library card, ask at the main desk how you can check it out.