



The Rubber Orchestra: A Memoir in Two Voices

Nancy Johnson

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In August 2002, the car in which Nancy Johnson, her husband, Arthur, and their seven-year-old son Wally were driving home from a trip to Oregon was struck head-on by a Chevy Silverado pickup truck. All three were seriously injured, and Arthur, who was driving, was not expected to survive. Nancy tended to her family and began to write this memoir about the accident and its effects. Then, in 2003, with the family far from healed, Nancy was diagnosed with ovarian cancer and began treatment.

The Rubber Orchestra, told in two voices, focuses on the time from the accident until June 2006, when Nancy was cancer free. Living and writing with humor, strength, insight, and her usual no-nonsense attitude, Nancy describes how the family bounced back from disaster and was finally looking forward and "behaving as if we have a future." Then her cancer returned. She was finishing the memoir when she died in January 2012.

NANCY JOHNSON was an accomplished broadcast journalist who left that career to write creatively. Her poetry was widely published in literary reviews. Her collection, *Zoo & Cathedral*, received the first White Pine Press Poetry Prize in 1995. "Writing Toward the Center," Nancy's essay about writing this memoir, was included in *Dedicated to the People of Darfur: Writings on Risk, Hope, and Fear*, published by Rutgers Press in 2009.

Born and raised in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Nancy graduated from Randolph-Macon College and received an M.Ed. from Lehigh University, an M.A. from Johns Hopkins University, and an M.F.A. from the University of Arizona. She taught English and creative writing at several colleges. In 1999, Nancy moved with her husband and son from Washington, D.C., to Oakland, California, where she lived until her death at the age of sixty-three.

"In this remarkable memoir, Nancy Johnson creates beauty from cataclysm, inspiration from calamity, and grace from hell. It is a masterful work, made all the more tragic by the fact that its accomplished author died soon after its completion, leaving bereft all who knew her, and all who will read her marvelous book."

--Ayelet Waldman, author of *Love and Treasure*

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