

A Widow's Awakening

Creative non-fiction book

By Maryanne Pope

Reader Testimonials

As at January 2012

“A powerful and courageous book.”

Brian Willis, Winning Minds Training, Calgary, AB

“*A Widow's Awakening* gives a rare insight into the emotional roller coaster and psychological struggle experienced by the newly widowed wife of a police officer, senselessly killed on duty as the result of an unsafe workplace. This compelling account of personal tragedy and its aftermath is told with brutal honesty and a sense of humour uniquely her own. The dangers and consequences of policing, its effect on family, friends and comrades, as well as the author's determination to improve workplace safety in memory of her husband, results in a fascinating and thought provoking book.”

Chief Rick Hanson, Calgary Police Service

“I just finished reading your book. I enjoyed reading it and found it hard to put down. My husband is a police officer, so that alone made me interested in reading your book. The other reason is a tragedy that happened in my world this year. My brother was killed in Afghanistan 5 months ago. He was a Paramedic and when his group was ambushed by the Taliban, he was shot and killed. It has been a very rough, emotional time for me trying to deal with this and come to terms with what happened. Thank you for sharing your story through this book. It really was amazing and inspirational.”

Carolyn, Calgary, AB

“Your book is amazing and your story is an inspiration to everyone.”

Mary, Calgary, AB

“After waiting for 8 years, I was not disappointed with the excruciating, painful story that unfolded on each page. The mind-numbing experience of a young woman losing her husband cannot be comprehended by someone who has not gone through this.

Maryanne's gripping, raw account of her journey, during and after this tragic time in her life is worthy of a good read. Her vulnerability in describing the events of the day of John's death and her minute by minute survival is the closest I have encountered to being inside someone else's skin. *A Widow's Awakening* will give great insight to those of us who have not experienced this loss.”

Deborah McInnes, Off-Duty Partners, Calgary, AB

“*A Widow's Awakening* is a brilliant tale of rage and redemption . . . prisoner, prophet, victim or visionary . . . Pope is a master of dialogue who lays her soul bare . . . an exhilarating ride!”

Claire Scott, Author, Butterfly Blessings and Butterfly Wisdom, Salmon Arm, BC

“Just finished the book . . . loved it! I’m not a reader at all but I read the book hoping to relate to my mother’s situation of being widowed. I wanted to relate to her woman to woman rather than mother to daughter. I think your book has helped me to do this. Thanks for your honesty.”

Heidi, Calgary, AB

“All I can say after devouring your book in 24 hours (which I have not done in three years!) . . . is that you could see me reading it in bed, on the seabus, on the couch . . . it is wildly energetic and honest and authentic and funny and real. I loved it . . . incredibly heartbreaking but life affirming at the same time.”

Alex, North Vancouver, BC

“I happened to be in Chapters recently and walked by Maryanne. I had read about the book and I knew I needed to buy it. That was 3 days ago and I finished it last night. All I can say is WOW . . . what an incredible journey by a courageous woman. Thank you for doing this.

Verne, retired police officer, Calgary, AB

“I just finished reading *A Widow’s Awakening* and thought it beautifully written. I was completely absorbed in every page . . . it was funny, sad and shocking. People can learn from the honest insight, all of the emotions that people go through when grieving the loss of a loved one. I think it’s a wonderful gift that you have given back in John’s name . . . a memorial fund that can make a difference in other people’s lives . . . because isn’t that what John and all police officers’ intent is after all?”

Peggy, married to a police officer, Calgary, AB

“I couldn’t put this book down! As the spouse of a firefighter, this unforgettable book made me feel that although there are dangers faced by emergency workers, everyone has the same right to safety. By the author exposing her real feelings and asking questions about the tragic death of her husband, she gives a sense of hope that the threats faced by emergency workers can be reduced.”

Kristin Atkinson, married to a firefighter, Calgary, AB

“Told with brave candour and intelligent wit, *A Widow’s Awakening* takes you on an enlightening journey into the worlds of policing, hospital trauma units, Orthodox religion, unsafe workplaces, and the unexpected areas our minds can wander into when life becomes almost too painful to bear. An inspiring story of coming to terms with the unimaginable in order to live a life with purpose and meaning, this book is a testament to the capacity of the human spirit.”

Shannon Lyons, Communications Consultant, Calgary, AB

“In the opening of *A Widow’s Awakening*, Pope quotes the following from Stephen King: “Writing is not life, but sometimes it can be a way back to life.” With her first book the Calgary author has written her way back to life – perhaps not the life she has imagined, but a life nonetheless.”

Kim Gray, Calgary Herald

“You almost want to apologize, reading Maryanne Pope’s account of her husband’s death. So vivid is her description, you feel like an intruder . . . to follow a young widow through the horror, grief and gradual healing which follows a police officer’s death is something unique for a reader, a voyeuristic journey both heart wrenching and uncomfortable.”

Michael Platt, Calgary Sun

“It is painful, numbing and often infuriating. It is a tribute to the untapped strength we all have inside of us.”

Ian Wilson, Managing Director, John Petropoulos Memorial Fund

“Your book is FABULOUS . . . I couldn’t put it down! The story is gripping, and the writing is fluid and engaging. Bravo!! What I found the most intriguing is the religion/spirituality topic. I have already suggested the book to one of my clients and several of my friends.”

Susan Rochow, Therapist, Calgary, AB

“All I can say is WOW! How did you do it? I laughed, I cried . . . I laughed again and cried some more. It was the bravest piece of literature I have ever read.”

Ann L, Calgary, AB

“Your book had me captivated – I couldn’t put it down! At times it was very tough to read the details of John’s death and to hear about the pain you have gone through, yet you still had so much humour and intelligence intertwined throughout it all – amazing.”

Ann V, Vancouver, B.C.

“I am blown away by for so many reasons . . . if only I found more books like yours on my shelf. I am strongly encouraging my friends to read your book. They need to!”

Wendy, Calgary, AB

“Thank you for sharing your story and incredible journey. What struck me in particular was your search for spiritual answers to relieve the blinding emotional pain. It was great comfort to see you put into words some of the exact emotions I felt when I tragically lost my dad this year. I can see now that everyone does find their way to heal those very raw wounds in the process of grieving.”

Sandra, Calgary, AB

“I was deeply touched by your book. It got me thinking a lot about how to get back on track with what I deem success or a good life. Thanks for allowing your reader to taste the reality of your situation through your candour, cynicism, humour and hope.”

Darrell, Calgary, AB

“I’m halfway through your book and absolutely loving it. You kind of hang your heart and soul out on the line, which takes a lot of courage. It’s making me think a lot about religion, life, death, love, loss, family and friends.”

Colleen L, Saskatoon, SK

“Thanks so much for sharing your story. I love it – and I’ll be encouraging my colleagues to consider this book. Reading the book puts into much greater context the work that you’re doing through the John Petropoulos Memorial Fund.”

Barrie Harrison, WorkSafe Alberta, AB Human Resources & Development

“Just finished it – between the tears and smiles, I am overwhelmed. My last year has been an exercise in my own grief – the deaths of my marriage and my mother within hours. There is a certain kind of hurt that cannot be explained, only felt on the cellular. Your story was as close to capturing that hollow ache as anything I’ve read.”

Elizabeth, Edmonton, AB

“I got home Friday night and was going to “start” the book – well, I didn’t put it down till I finished!! I laughed but mostly cried. It was an amazing read . . . thank you for sharing.”

Sherry W, Calgary, AB

“I have read the first heartbreaking 100 pages and you really do have a sense of story, character and dialogue. I could feel your agony when you lost your husband and what happened in the hospital. Thanks so much for sharing your book with me and I wish you and your company all the best luck in spreading words and stories that mend the world. What else do we have?”

Evan Solomon, Host CBC News: Sunday and Sunday Night

“It’s absolutely fantastic! I cried like a baby, laughed like a hyena, and got angry like a summer storm all in the same book!”

Darren L, Calgary, AB

“I wanted to congratulate you on your truly remarkable book. God forbid, if I ever have to deal with such a tragedy, I hope I can do it with the strength and resolve that you did. Thanks for sharing your experience.”

Gwen Farnsworth, Health in Action

“I am fascinated and empathetic to an individual’s unique human journey. I couldn’t help but hope that Adri would awaken with a vision of what would be her mission in life and by the end of the book, she would say, “I’m getting there.” Thank you...she did!!”

Ted P, Montreal, Quebec

“What an incredibly powerful and moving book! Although I had tears in my eyes as I read each page, I think your messages are uplifting and are so important in challenging the human spirit to make our lives mean something meaningful in this world, by helping others and doing something more for society. It is so cleverly written and thought provoking. I haven’t enjoyed a book this much since I taught classic literature to high school students a few years ago.”

Sarah Hourihan, Calgary, AB

“A Widow’s Awakening is chillingly honest.”

Ellen Kelly, Calgary, AB

“It was awesome. We drove to LA and I could not put the book down. By the time we reached Primm, Nevada, I had read the whole book. You are a credit to the female population...a fighter to stand up for yourself and what you believe is right.”

Darlene C, Calgary, AB

“*A Widow’s Awakening* serves as an outstanding wake up call to the public regarding workplace safety for emergency services personnel. It lays out, in heart wrenching detail, what happens when a first responder doesn’t come home because of an unsafe workplace. The book acts as a poignant reminder of the constant dangers faced by emergency services workers every day. This book should leave everyone asking: ‘What can I do to make my workplace safer? How can I prevent this from ever happening again?’”

Ian Wilson, Managing Director, John Petropoulos Memorial Fund

“After reading Maryanne’s book, I felt it was necessary for others to hear her story. The reality is that emergency services personnel do die in the line of duty. It’s important that we learn from Maryanne and her life experiences. I’m confident that her story can be used as a tool to allow others cope with their loss.”

Vince Savoia, Tema Conter Memorial Trust

“It was a gripping read, so intense that I read it in small bits so I could absorb the information. Thank you for sharing this very personal journey...I know it will help so many people. Anyone who experiences the loss of a loved one and all of the crazy emotional roller coaster that accompanies will benefit from the knowledge that they really are not alone, and not crazy. Your book has also made me more aware of my surroundings, not only at work, but everywhere. I’ll be recommending your book to many others.”

Lesley, Paramedic, Halifax, Nova Scotia

“I just finished reading *A Widow’s Awakening*. I laughed, I cried, I reflected. I wanted you to know that it had exactly the effect on me that I imagine you wanted for your readers. My eyes, ears and heart were opened to many things; the belief and trust in love and soul mates (which I myself have lost sight of), the tremendous loss of others when a loved one, especially an emergency services personnel, loses their life, and of course the importance of passion and commitment to the work that we do, regardless of what it is. I just wanted to thank you for your honesty and openness. The book was amazing.”

Sarah Polson, Social Worker, Calgary, Alberta

“I just finished *A Widow’s Awakening*. Thank you. I laughed, I cried, I laughed when I was crying, and I found a fellow Anglican who asks a lot of the same questions I ask. Reading your touching work has realigned my thinking in a way that Tony Robbins’ *Awaken the Giant Within* and Stephen R. Covey’s *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* and Deepak Chopra’s *The Book of Secrets* all have. You’ve shone a light on many of the same issues I have been wrestling with in terms of writing and making a difference. Thank you!”

Tim Reynolds, Stand-up Comedian, Calgary, Alberta

“My heart is beating harder and my breathing shorter. I am hugging Russ tighter and kissing him longer. I have burnt supper while reading! I have read books until wee hours of the night but I have not felt this much about a book before. You are an incredibly gifted writer...I feel like I am right beside you and that I am getting to know John and your relationship together. I love how he loved you. I love your writing style, how brilliantly you tie everything together and how you authentically share your soul.”

Kim Williamson, Photographer, Bragg Creek, Alberta

“I have just finished reading *A Widow’s Awakening*. Like others, I picked it up, became very absorbed and read it non-stop, every chance I got. It is perfect. The storyteller is wonderfully unpredictable and eccentric. I love her. Thank you for doing it and for doing it so well.”

Linda M, Alberta

“My husband passed away November 9, 2007 at the age of 43 (massive heart attack with no warning signs). He was not a police officer, however I can truly relate to a lot of what you say in your book. I’m realizing that what I am going through is normal. Good days and bad days.”

Gina B, Ottawa, Ontario

“In January, my husband’s best friend took his own life. During one of our many weekly phone calls, she mentioned that she picked up a copy of your book recommended to her by a victim services worker who had recently attended an engagement at which you were speaking. You began as an inspiring writer, overnight you became an inspiring person and I just want to thank you for helping my friend.”

Stacey C, Calgary, AB

“I read your book last week and thoroughly enjoyed it. The first part had me wiping my eyes at the end of every page but the last two parts basically summarized my time as a police officer! At first I was thinking ‘I don’t ever want my wife to read this book’ but when I got through the first part I started to think it would put things in perspective for her...it sure did for me.”

Jeff Z, Medicine Hat, AB

“WOW! As soon as I read the first line, I couldn’t put the book down. The truth on soul-mates, hope, after-life, happiness, sadness...you definitely told your tale as it is. I can’t stop talking about this book. I’m glad you shared your story with us.”

Parveen H, Calgary, AB

“I must tell you that I found your book heart wrenching and also had a couple of really good laughs. I couldn’t put it down. I think you have the ability with your writing to really make the reader live what you were living. Hopefully there will be many more books forthcoming.”

Sandra S, Calgary, AB

“I just finished reading your book and I found it extremely thought provoking and very well written. I am completely impressed with your strength of character and your perseverance.”

Darrell H, police officer, Calgary, AB

“I wanted to thank you, like so many people probably have, for sharing a part of yourself that was so raw. It made me feel at times I needed to close the book to give you your privacy back. Your book was amazing.”

Sherrylynn W, Edmonton, AB

“I bought your book yesterday and meant to wait until the next day to read it. I crawled into bed and tried to sleep but something kept at me. So I crawled out of bed and read your book from start to finish. It was amazing. I couldn’t put it down.”

Darcy C, Calgary, AB

“In a remarkable, can’t-put-it-down book called *A Widow’s Awakening*, Maryanne Pope lays bare the raw, painful and sometimes embarrassing truth of what it means to lose a ‘soul mate love’ to the hazards of law enforcement, including the heart wrenching truth that her husband didn’t have to die the way he did.”

*Chuck Remsberg, Senior Correspondent,
PoliceOne/Calibre Press, Chicago, IL*

“*A Widow’s Awakening* has touched my heart and given me the courage to make the changes needed in my own life as an aspiring author. My husband is a police officer and I can relate to some of the experiences portrayed within the book.”

April L, Grande Prairie, AB

“I LOVED your book! I cried, I laughed, felt your anger...and was willingly drawn into your opinions on Christianity, the transition from life to death, your feelings about the environment...it was really an amazing read. I selected your book for our choice for our book club, as I think it will spark so much interest and conversation in your experience. You have such an ability to move people in your speaking and your writing.”

Linda MacGillivray, Calgary, AB

“As emergency services workers, we are tasked with protecting our community in environments that are never predictable, always volatile, and often beyond our control. We tread into environments that demand skill and knowledge; where putting one foot in front of the other is a way of life. Still, there are unsafe elements that exist in our workplace that we cannot expect, where only the unexpected happens.

John’s death and Maryanne’s life bring to the forefront the issue of workplace safety after hours – when our community is asleep we are protecting their businesses, properties and investments, which are often themselves the very menace we face. Maryanne inspires us to carefully continue putting one foot in front of the other while demanding that the community protect us as we protect them.”

Staff Sergeant Darren Leggatt, Calgary Police Service, ILEETA Review

“I started reading your book on Sunday and finished it Monday. The first third of your book touched me in ways I hadn’t anticipated. I cried so hard my eyes became swollen; the pain was so real. I haven’t cried that hard in a long, long time. The grief you expressed was so real to me, as I experienced (my own grief) in a similar way. Reading your book has been healing for me.”

Cristy Hayden, Calgary, AB

“I really liked your book. It was very moving. I have gone through a lot of tragedy in my life...and I felt a sense of relief when I read your book. My friend lost three significant people in her life in three years, so I bought her a copy of your book – and she tore through it as voraciously as I did and truly enjoyed it. Thanks for telling your story!”

Shelley Ferrara, Calgary, AB

“I’ve just finished reading your book...congratulations! You write very well and did a very good job on what must’ve been a tough, tough project.”

Barbara Smith

“I wanted to let you know how your book touched me. *A Widow’s Awakening* made me weep, and laugh, and weep...and it was a poignant reminder to cherish the time we have together with our family. I know this will sound cliché, but I couldn’t put your book down. Literally. I wasn’t able to set the book down until I had read right through to the end. You are a very talented writer and I want to thank you for sharing your talent and your story.”

Jolie Brewer, Regina, Saskatchewan

“I have to tell you this: I just started reading your book yesterday...I know you’ve probably heard this before but I can’t put it down! It is amazing!”

Andrea Olmstead, Winnipeg, MB

“I just lent your book to my girlfriend from school. Just as everybody else has said, she absolutely loved your book, your story and your ability to capture it in a way that allows us to walk with you and feel even a fraction of what you felt.”

Sarah Polson, Calgary, AB

“Wow!”

Leslie Horton, Global TV Calgary

“I have just finished reading your “*A Widow’s Awakening*,” and I had to drop you a note. I was tremendously impressed with your book. By being so honest and open in sharing your feelings and emotions surrounding this tragic event, you are helping me (and other readers) handle the losses and disappointments in our own lives. The book is a great read, interesting, funny...very human. It was very hard to put down and I know I will read it again.”

Nancy P, Kingston, ON

“I absolutely LOVED your book. I laughed and cried so many times throughout and almost always on Calgary transit with hundreds of strangers looking on!”

Claudette W, Calgary, AB

“Your book was amazing, completely inspiring, raw and I am, as always, so impressed with what you do...but more importantly who you are!”

Lolly D, Calgary, AB

“Others were correct when they said your book was hard to put down! First and foremost, thank you for sharing your journey with me and all your readers. Your book was a moving narrative of courage – I laughed, I cried, I was enlightened. I was not surprised by your response to grief/loss; in fact your reactions seemed very fitting given how powerful the mind is. I was, however, surprised by your strength and impressed by your resolve to see the opportunity in your circumstances.”

Alison E, Psychologist, Calgary, AB

“I met you when you came to speak to our Financial Planning Group. I read your book in a day and a half. It was extremely moving and you are a fabulous writer. Your story touched my soul. I just wanted you to know that you have impacted my life with your story. I have “nagged” like a Mom does to my boys and their wives to get their wills and power of attorneys completed and your story (I have shared it with them) has given them the nudge or kick in the butt to getting this done.”

Dianne LeQuesne, Financial Planner, Victoria, BC

“I just received your book at our bookclub. I must admit, your book is painful to read and raw at times, but I have not been able to put it down. Tonight I can't sleep. I am not finished but already know from radio commercials that you somehow summoned the strength to establish a memorial fund and highlight the importance of workplace safety for all emergency personnel. I want you to know that John is not forgotten and that his memory is being kept alive by people like me; who are talking about your book and having to do some deep soul searching as a result. I also have some writing to do in my life (a master's thesis) and have been continually putting it off for fear of failure. Your words speak to me in a way that touches me deeply and reminds me of my own reason for living. I thank you for sharing yours.”

Lorraine Bauer, Strathmore, AB

“I wanted you to know that your book was a huge help to me during my journey through grief. My husband was killed in the line of duty in August 2007 while attempting to make an arrest. It was the most horrible time of my life and it was comforting to know that the feelings I had were not “abnormal.” I could relate to your story all too well. I have worked very hard at re-building my life for my children and for myself. I feel happy again and have been able to move forward with my life. You were a true inspiration to me and I have shared your book with other young widows who I have met over the past few years.”

SP, ON

“I am a professional in the community with a counselling background. I had worked for a bereavement agency in Calgary and heard of you...my fellow colleagues spoke highly of your book. They stated that all professional bereavement counsellors should read “A Widow's Awakening” because of the raw, honest description of grief you experienced.”

Paula J, Calgary, AB

“We recently received two copies of *A Widow’s Awakening*. Thank you! We have served so many young families recently who have suffered the death of a spouse. I often recall things I read in your book because you have such a wonderful way of expressing yourself. I think your passion is education about safe work environments but you also have wonderful wisdom regarding grief.”

Crystal Bailey, Bailey’s Funeral Home, Yorkton, SK

“*A Widow’s Awakening* is a poignant story about dreams, soul mates, pain, rage, grief, transformation and accountability. Even the cover strikes a cord in your heart. This book will awaken anyone who reads it to the truth of who they really are and what is ultimately important. I experienced every human emotion intensely as I read through its pages. It made me cry and it made me laugh. It made me soar and it brought me to my knees. It humbled me and it challenged me to ask the big questions of my own life. I salute Maryanne for her courage, insight, vulnerability, audacity and authenticity. I stand in awe of her ability to ignite the fire in each of us. I pay tribute to her mastery in awakening the light within all of us by telling a story that needed to be told.”

Veronica Hay, Inspirational Author, Calgary, AB

“I received the *A Widow’s Awakening* book and *Put Yourself in Our Boots* safety video last week. I watched the video first so it was nice to put faces to the book once I began reading it. I finished reading the book a few days later as it was very good. I really enjoyed Maryanne’s smart ass sense of humour and her rawness of exactly what she was experiencing during the most difficult time of her life. It truly is heartbreaking that she had to fulfill her dream of becoming a writer through the death of her husband. However, her pain and suffering has not gone unnoticed and John will never be forgotten. Her dedication and hard work with others in the John Petropoulos Memorial Fund is getting through to those responsible for providing a safe work environment for their employees – and for emergency responders as well. I have also noticed an increase in the “Put Yourself in Our Boots” commercials. Keep up the great work!”

Anna Mast, Peace Officer, Cypress County, AB

“My husband was a police officer who was killed in 2010. I read your book and it got me through some really hard times. Thank you so much for writing it. Your book made me know that the feelings I’m feeling are okay...and I’m not going mad.”

EO, ON

“I really enjoyed your book. I found it candid and funny. I really liked the letter towards the end to the other widow and how you summarized the fact that everyone grieves differently. I think this book would be very helpful to our clients as it shows the process our brain and heart must work through during healing...also that this process is going to look different for everyone and there is no such thing as “normal.”

Caitlin Grisack, Victim Services, Burnaby RCMP, BC

“Wow!!! I could not put your book down! Even when my eyes were swollen shut from crying, I continued to read. After 5 years, my grief is still pretty raw but it comes in waves and tides. I had 18 months of counselling and that did not come close to the comfort I got from your book. For me, it was nice to hear someone else express the thoughts that I was thinking (i.e am I crazy, is he still here somewhere, does God really exist, leave me alone! etc). I can't tell you how much your book helped me. I laughed and I cried and I felt connected. Your book gave me hope.”

Brenda C, Winnipeg, MB

“I recently finished reading “A Widow’s Awakening.” I was deeply moved by your journey. Thank you for being so transparent and honest with your thoughts and feelings. In 1995 my sister received a kidney from a young man who had died in an automobile accident. While our family gathered at the hospital in celebration of her chance at a new life, we were keenly aware of the family who gave the greatest gift in their greatest hour of grief and devastation. Our gratitude for the family is overwhelming and your story helped me to greater appreciate that the sacrifice they made in their darkest hour.”

JZ, Calgary, AB

“I so thank you for the acknowledgement of all those “crazy-making” parts of the journey through grief...and thank you again for putting it into a book! I now look forward to reading everything you’ve written, so you definitely have a fan here. You are an inspiration. I’ve discussed “A Widow’s Awakening” at our grief session last evening at the hospital and now everyone wants to read the book, too.”

RK, Calgary, AB

“I have been reading your book and want to say thank you. It’s so beautiful and so real, that I can’t describe it. Like you, I lived it. The love of my life was killed at work in September 2000, when he fell putting up rafters for a building. He was 52. I miss him so much and it still hurts. Your book is a wonderful gift and I treasure it – and the knowledge that someone else felt and feels the same as I do. Somehow I don’t feel so alone. Thank you.”

Sherry S., SK