

Courtney's Legacy: A Father's Journey

George Cantor



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In the fall of 1998, George Cantor and his wife sent off their bright, funny, enthusiastic, 18-year-old daughter, Courtney, to the University of Michigan as a freshman. Six weeks later, the university called Cantor to claim her corpse. Courtney fell from her sixth-floor dormitory window after being served drinks illegally at a fraternity party.

The events surrounding her death were featured on the CBS news magazine 48 Hours. In Cantor's grief over losing Courtney, he sank into a bitter and prolonged depression that led him to question the value of his own life and newspaper career. This ended after a year when he was diagnosed with cancer, at which point the value of life suddenly and stunningly was renewed.

Emotional and reportorial, a mix of grief therapy, celebration of life, mystery, and social criticism, *Courtney's Legacy* addresses the reality of death, but views the issue from the other end of the life cycle. How do parents and friends deal with the loss of a young woman whose life was so full of promise? *Courtney's Legacy* also serves as an alarm for parents, being a tough examination of how university housing, legal, and social policies helped to create a situation that made Courtney's death a tragedy waiting to happen. Cantor eloquently unfolds his and Courtney's story, one of death, loss, and renewal, revealing that learning that acceptance of the past and celebration of the present is the only way to endure in our increasingly complex world.



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