

'Irreplaceable Gift' of Pain Helps Author Choose to Care

Julie Garmon

One four-letter word brings to light the success of Cecil Murphey, bestselling author, speaker, teacher, and man of many words: pain.

Many believe great writers share a common bond — a difficult childhood. Ask author Cecil Murphey to talk about when he was a boy, he'll say, "I was never a child. I grew up taking care of my parents."

Cecil Murphey is the son of an abusive alcoholic father. Tracing his family history reveals alcoholism in his grandfather, great-grandfather, paternal uncles, and his own brothers. Cec's father and three brothers died of alcoholism.

By the grace of God, Cec's life followed a different path. Touched by the deaths of those closest to him, Cec wrote, *When Someone You Love Abuses Drugs or Alcohol*. The book offers hope to those whose loved ones are trapped in addiction.

A small-framed man with an enormous heart and mind, Cec has written or co-authored more than 100 books, including *Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story*; *Rebel with a Cause* (Franklin Graham); *I Choose to Stay* (Salome Thomas-El); *90 Minutes in Heaven* (Don Piper), and *Touchdown Alexander* (Shaun Alexander). His uncanny ability to write another person's story is infinite. Give him some time and a tape recorder, and this master chameleon of endless empathy *becomes* the other person. Folks open up and talk. They just plain trust him.

Cec and his wife, Shirley, served as missionaries in Kenya for six years. He was a pastor for ten years, and has volunteered as a hospital chaplain for more than a decade. The Kenyans nicknamed him "Haraka" which translates "fast." To walk alongside Cec means a brisk jog. It seems he possesses the ability to outrun age. He runs 30 miles a week and could still fit into his high school blue jeans. Not particularly fashion conscious, he'd still wear them.

A chat with Cec Murphey is a lot like a rigorous-but-satisfying tennis match. He's an incredible listener but get ready for a verbal workout. His smile flashes unexpectedly as though your picture's being snapped by paparazzi. Speedy, determined, and in fantastic physical shape, he might have made it as a tennis star, but he's never had time for sports. Instead, he's become a phenomenal writer, teacher, speaker, and above all — a giver.

Married for 51 years to Shirley, a soft-spoken top-notch editor, the couple has three children, eight grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. She surprised Cec with a pair of black leather pants for his seventieth birthday. Shirley remains his steadfast cheerleader and allows her husband the spotlight. A breast cancer survivor, she's the epitome of "still water runs deep."

Cec's wisdom, humor, and gut-level honesty captures audiences of thousands as well as the terrified beginning writer who desperately needs to hear, "Keep writing. I believe in you." He's a keynote speaker who's never had a bad-hair day, not that he's into looks. His curly hair, dark at one time, has turned subtle gray, adding to his distinction. With Cherokee Indian cheekbones, and coal-black eyes, the lean, hungry-looking man draws attention wherever he goes. But Cec focuses on those who need him and serves where he can make a difference, including caregiving awareness efforts.

For the twelfth year in a row, November has been the National Family Caregivers' Month. In 2005, President Bush declared November to also become the National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month. One in four families deals with difficulties of caregiving. The ever-prepared Haraka is busy rendering aid. Books in his caregiving series include, *When Someone You Love Suffers from Depression*, *My Parents My Children—Spiritual Help for Caregivers*, *When Someone You Love Has Alzheimer's*, and *When Someone You Love Abuses Drugs or Alcohol*. Each book is packed with wise counsel from the best source possible — someone who's been there.

Cec and Shirley welcomed Edith, an elderly relative, into their home for six and

a half years. Edith had lost her only son to cancer at age seventeen. She'd spent ten years giving her husband around-the-clock nursing home care at home. Widowed for five years, she needed someone to take care of her. Were there difficult days for the Murpheys? You bet. But they did the right thing for Edith.

As a caregiving conference leader, Cec shares in straight-forward candor how to perceive giving care as a divinely appointed ministry. He believes a social support system for caretakers is vital. Cec understands caregivers doubt themselves, and even God. Sometimes there are no easy answers but he doesn't back away from tough questions like:

"Is there any sense in this chaos?"

"How do I become a father to my dad?"

"My parents hate me because of these changes. How can I please them?"

"I've given up my hobbies. My friends. My life. Maybe I'm the one dying."

"Does God care?"

Cec believes that only when we realize we aren't sufficient and need help can we begin to grasp God's strength.

With down-to-earth transparency Cec leads mentoring writing clinics. He nurtures writers as he tends to his yard — the old fashioned way. He creates beauty through hard work. Cec grows no grass, only flowers. He's earned double masters in theology and education, and jerks out dangling participles and misplaced modifiers like weeds. He edits writing with the same vengeance he uses for pruning azaleas but never forgets to add the fertilizer of encouragement. Excellence is his trademark.

Whether speaking, teaching, or ordering vegetarian food and black coffee, Cec appears incredibly self-assured, but those who know him best sense a trace of unresolved ache. A lingering tender spot in his heart — the spot from where he writes.

Cec flew a thousand miles to be with his father before he died. This is their final conversation taken from *My Parents—My Children* (pg201):

“I’ve only wanted one thing from you. I wanted your love. I’ve never felt I had it.”

When I finished he nodded slowly. “Hmmm, well,” he said. He left the room.

Cec has stumbled onto life-changing truth. Pain is an irreplaceable gift. A teacher. A friend. His own healing brings Cec Murphey to care about every person he meets, and in doing so, God uses him to help set multitudes free.

Crosswalk is proud to announce Cecil Murphey's [Invading the Privacy of God](#) is our newest weekly [Devotional](#) offering!

Rush into God's presence...

Put an end to devotional boredom...

Revitalize your prayer life.

Check out *Invading the Privacy of God* [here](#)!