

Phyllis Langton has had as illustrious a career as anyone in academia, but she has taken infinite pains now to write a different kind of book. Her story of her husband's life with and death from ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) yields many a valuable lesson, but this lesson above all: that dying, whatever its pains, can be both a negative and a positive experience. Here love and mortality, laughter and sorrow are all but inseparable, and their inseparability may help lessen a reader's fear of death and dying. Anyone who enjoys a deeply moving story will want to read this wondrous, indispensable book, and anybody who faces adversity, that is to say everybody, will need to read it.

Jeffery Paine—author of *Father India*, *Re-enchantment*, *Adventures with the Buddha*, and *Tales of Wonder* (with Huston Smith). Judge for the Pulitzer Prize and former vice-president of the National Book Critics Circle.

Like many others, I've not been comfortable with the subject of death—the death of my loved ones or myself. How lucky we humans are to have Phyllis Langton's story as part of our lives. This moving book has allowed me to look death in the eye, and even find a way to laugh about it. Langton shows us that deep love and laughter make the sorrow and loss bearable, paving the way for this ultimate journey and beyond. . . .

Jill Breckenridge—author of *The Gravity of Flesh* and *Miss Priss and the Con Man*.

I couldn't put *Last Flight Out* down. I wanted it to go on so I could learn more about Phyllis and George and their story about facing ALS together. George had a terminal disease and he and Phyllis chose to live and love to the fullest! What an incredible message to read especially with a disease that takes and takes.

Sharon J. Matland, R.N., M.B.A.—Vice-President of Patient Services, ALS Association

Who would have thought that disease can be a page-turner? But Phyllis Langton's bittersweet memoir of her fighter-pilot husband's last years shows that a good marriage can be as joyous in sickness as it is in health. *Last Flight Out* is a vivid, sparkling story about facing death with grace and high spirits.

Mark Weston—author of *Giants of Japan* and *Prophets and Princes: Saudi Arabia From Muhammad to the Present*.

Last Flight Out really touched my heart. As the hospice physician who cared for George, I found the description of the denial of his symptoms extremely compelling and riveting and it taught me to appreciate more deeply the psychological defenses which patients use to protect themselves against the perception of their own vulnerabilities. In addition, this memoir reminds all who read it of the paramount need to honor and respect a patient's wishes to control the conditions of care and medical treatment. George achieved a wonderful peace of mind as his disease relentlessly progressed. Everyone should be so fortunate to have such a resourceful and loving advocate for their partner.

Dr. Henry Willner—Hospice Physician and Palliative Care Consultant, Capital Hospice.

George Thomas's reaction to a diagnosis of ALS reminded me of that moment in my own life. Each of us then learned, at last, what was happening to us. Both of us now had to figure out how we were going to live the rest of our lives. Phyllis Langton has gifted us with this testimony to the way that she and George lived their answer.

On the surface this book is about Phyllis, George and ALS. As the chapters unfold we feel what it is like to live with a progressive disease. However, in words permeated with compassion, Phyllis is doing more than remembering. She is inviting us to find ourselves in her story. Like George I have ALS. Like George I'm surrounded by the love of my wife and a community of friends. We all must learn to accommodate ourselves each day to life in a body that is less able than it was yesterday. In the midst of our diverse journeys we are invited to realize the love that surrounds us and to compassionately care for others. In the end we are reminded that it is faith, hope and love that sustain us. This book had to be written. It is yearning for you to read it.

Rev. Dr. John W. Mingus, Sr.—*Retired after 37 years as an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, now living richly with ALS in Venice, FL with his wife and two young sons.*

In my 28 years as a healthcare chaplain I have observed the journey toward death Phyllis Langton portrays in *Last Flight Out*. But I am a professional who only sees those brief moments I am at the hospital or nursing home bedside or visiting in someone's home. Langton invites us into her life with her husband George as he moves through increasing disability to his final breaths. It is moving and, in my view, honest. The prospect of a certain death is only one of the great losses Phyllis and George experienced. George is able to experience the death of his own choosing through Phyllis' commitment to honor his wishes. They live fully while he is dying. Everyone's course toward death is different but Langton's story has lessons for all of us. Enjoy the humor, find your own rituals, enlist friends and professionals to help, grieve the losses (and they are many), honor each other, and learn to let go.

Chaplain Hank Dunn—author of *Hard Choices for Loving People*.

The ALS community of patients and caregivers was not one Phyllis Langton and her late husband, George, chose to join, but the insidious disease took up residence with them during the last three years of their remarkable marriage. In *Last Flight Out* Langton does more than relate the details of her fighter pilot husband's battle with illness; she shares a transforming experience with such compelling grace and fierce love that the reader is also transformed. This is a book that will initiate conversations on illness, on marriage, on love, and certainly on the importance of people coming together to support and celebrate a life. Langton's profound memoir reminds us that as long as we are willing to share our life stories, we are never alone.

Kerry Langan—author of *Only Beautiful & Other Stories*