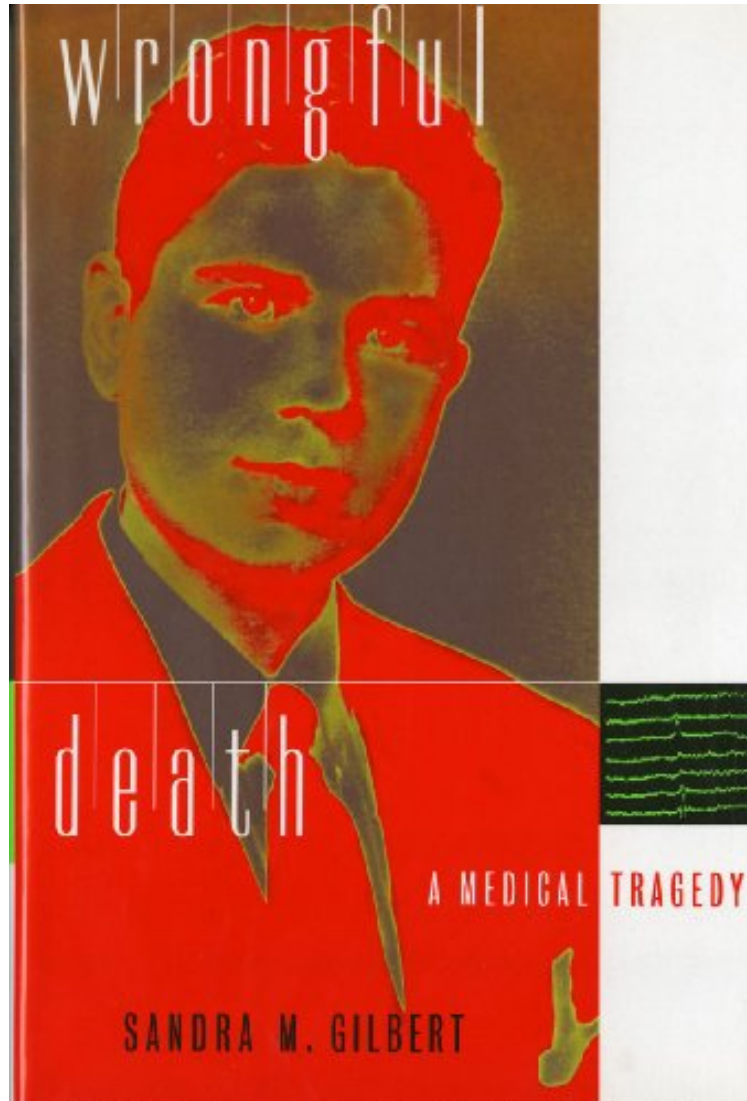


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Wrongful Death: A Memoir

Sandra M. Gilbert

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Sandra M. Gilbert : Wrongful Death: A Memoir before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Wrongful Death: A Memoir:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy customerIt was a book for school0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Sad but true!By WendyThis story is riveting and such a home hitter. I hope that those who like true stories would engage themselves in this book.21 of 40 people found the following review helpful. Wrongful ConclusionsBy A CustomerSandra Gilbert's poignant tale of her 60 year old husband's death after prostate cancer surgery is marred by her universally distorted portrayal of his doctors at the UC Davis University Hospital,

where he died in 1991. While she freely and repeatedly demonstrates her ignorance and lack of sophistication regarding the medical issues involved in her husband's case, that doesn't stop her from treating her misunderstandings and fantasies as reality. From her point of view, you would think that her husband's physicians were callous monsters, who didn't care if he lived or died. The truth is far less nefarious, though probably for her, less satisfying. In the end, the real events surrounding her husband's death do not reveal any conspiracy, cover-up, or gross negligence. In fact, her husband suddenly "crashed" only after what was essentially over 4 uneventful hours in the recovery room, where the only abnormality was a low grade elevated heart rate (common after surgery) and a one time drop in blood pressure early on, which responded immediately to appropriate treatment (also common). Indeed, until he coded, he appeared to be doing quite well. It is only after the failed resuscitation that it became apparent that he must have been bleeding occultly, despite his apparent hemodynamic stability. The bottom line is that everyone in the recovery room missed the fact that that he was hemorrhaging internally, not because they were indifferent or incompetent, but because the clues were so subtle and their level of suspicion was too low. She complains that no one was forthcoming with information, as she struggled to understand what happened, yet, with her own words, whenever the primary surgeon tries to discuss the case, before and after the surgery, she demonstrates that she has trouble understanding the simplest concepts, even though he speaks in plain everyday language. Instead, she offensively ridicules his accent, and follows every statement of his with her own italicized confused thoughts and fantasies. Almost every statement or appearance of a physician in this book is caricatured and editorialized. In the end, she opts to take the money, accepting a settlement, rather than continue with depositions and go to trial, insuring that she never gets the explanation she claims she wants and needs so badly. If there are villains here it is her friends and family. For example, after her husband's death, a couple comes up to her and with the same breath as they ask "What happened?", they announce that a lawyer friend has told them that she has a case for medical malpractice. How in the world would he know? There are so many self-appointed "experts" among her relatives and acquaintances, all whispering in her ear their own theories and rumors and offering advice. And there is so much cynicism and anger among her family and friends toward the doctors, you would have thought they had bodily thrown her husband out a hospital window to his death. Indeed, that is how his care is ultimately described. There is much made of a missing hematocrit, drawn after an hour in the recovery room, yet it is acknowledged that hematocrits can be misleading because of the time required for "equilibration." She also makes much of an inability of the anesthesiologists to intubate her husband, which aborted the first attempt at surgery. His pictures in the book show him to have been a stocky man with a receding chin, short neck, and full beard. Of course they had trouble! There is no guarantee that you can successfully intubate any patient, even if you know ahead of time it will be difficult. They did the right and safe thing, by canceling the case, yet she repeatedly revisits the failed intubation and prudently cancelled case, each time more vehemently, until she ultimately claims her husband began to die then and there! Mrs. Gilbert revels in the role of victim, but like so many that title becomes comforting only if there are villains. And if there are none, she and her family, friends, and lawyers will manufacture them. Indeed, mistakes were made, with disastrous consequences, but there is no evidence that her late husband was treated with anything but professional kindness, charity, and compassion. Maybe his doctors deserve a little too.

"A wrenching tale of medical mistakes, death, shock, grief, and frustration, told with love and anger."--Kirkus Reviews, starred review Sandra Gilbert's husband, Elliot, underwent surgery for prostate cancer at a major medical center, and then inexplicably died hours later in the recovery room. To this day, no one from the hospital has told his family how or why he died.

.com Sixty-year-old Elliot Gilbert died mysteriously within twenty-four hours of checking into a hospital for routine prostate surgery. *Wrongful Death* is his widow's account of one family's experience with a type of medical disaster that occurs all too frequently but is rarely discussed in public policy debates focussed on growing costs and exorbitant lawyer fees. From Publishers Weekly "Because my husband, superb storyteller though he was, could not tell his own story, I have had to tell his story for him." This powerful memoir revisits and examines the 1991 death of poet and feminist scholar Gilbert's (No Man's Land) husband Elliot following prostate cancer surgery at the University of California Davis Medical Center. She and her family, suspecting medical negligence, engaged a lawyer and investigated the circumstances of the death; in 1992 they settled their lawsuit out of court. The memoir recounts the events preceding Elliot's death and leading up to and beyond the legal resolution. But its power lies in the writer's anger and her grief, and in her all-consuming determination: her book is a moving and extended meditation on moral obsession. It is also about the strained but stalwart emotional resources of a family. And it's a book likely to reach a broad readership among those who are increasingly suspicious of the medical establishment or who have suffered an abrupt loss like the author's. She is a professor of English at the University of California, Davis, as was her husband. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Gilbert (coauthor, with Susan Gubar, of the three-volume *No Man's Land*, LJ 11/1/87; LJ 3/1/89; LJ 10/1/94) brings the intelligence and sensitivity of her distinguished literary scholarship to this account of her and her family's reaction to the shattering "adverse event" that

caused her husband to bleed to death following routine prostate surgery at a major California teaching hospital. The callousness and secretiveness of the surgeon and hospital staff compounded the family's tragedy and, not surprisingly, led to claims of malpractice. The legal search for truth and accountability forms the book's central drama and offers a telling perspective on the often demonized field of medical malpractice. A compelling medical mystery, a passionate meditation on love and grief, and a sobering reminder of the transience of life; highly recommended for most libraries.--Kathy Arsenault, Univ. of South Florida at St. Petersburg Lib. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.