



# **The Rising: Murder, Heartbreak, and the Power of Human Resilience in an American Town**

*Ryan D'Agostino*

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**The astonishing story of one man's recovery in the face of traumatic loss—and a powerful meditation on the resilience of the soul**

On July 23, 2007, Dr. William Petit suffered an unimaginable horror: Armed strangers broke into his suburban Connecticut home in the middle of the night, bludgeoned him nearly to death, tortured and killed his wife and two daughters, and set their house on fire. He miraculously survived, and yet living through those horrific hours was only the beginning of his ordeal. Broken and defeated, Bill was forced to confront a question of ultimate consequence: How does a person find the strength to start over and live again after confronting the darkest of nightmares?

In *The Rising*, acclaimed journalist Ryan D'Agostino takes us into Bill Petit's world, using unprecedented access to Bill and his family and friends to craft a startling, inspiring portrait of human strength and endurance. To understand what produces a man capable of surviving the worst, D'Agostino digs deep into Bill's all-American upbringing, and in the process tells a remarkable story of not just a man's life, but of a community's power to shape that life through its embrace of loyalty and self-sacrifice as its most important values. Following Bill through the hardest days—through the desperate times in the aftermath of the attack and the harrowing trials of the two men responsible for it—*The Rising* offers hope that we can find a way back to ourselves, even when all seems lost.

Today, Bill Petit has remarried. He and his wife have a baby boy. The very existence of this new family defies rational expectation, and yet it confirms our persistent, if often unspoken, belief that we are greater than what befalls us, and that if we know where to look for strength in trying times, we will always find it. Bill's story, told as never before in *The Rising*, is by turns compelling and uplifting, an affirmation of the inexhaustible power of the human spirit.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## **The Rising: Murder, Heartbreak, and the Power of Human Resilience in an American Town Details**

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Author : Ryan D'Agostino

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## **From Reader Review The Rising: Murder, Heartbreak, and the Power of Human Resilience in an American Town for online ebook**

### **SundayAtDusk says**

If Dr. William Petit wanted his story told, he should have told it himself, even if he needed a co-writer. To have his story told the way it is told in this book was a terrible choice, in my opinion. The Petit murder story is being told like an all-American type story where a hero overcomes an adversity. That type of story is best left for those who have conquered illnesses, injuries or handicaps, not the killing of one's family-- especially not where a mother and her daughters were terrorized, raped, choked and burned to death in their own home. How Ryan D'Agostino told the story in this book is offensive beyond words.

(Note: I received an ARC of this book from Amazon Vine.)

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### **Debbie says**

4 stars!

This was a true crime story, but that's not all it was about. It was the rising out of the ashes of a man, a father and a husband.

A horrible tragic event occurred in 2007 that left Bill Petit for dead, his house in ashes and his wife and two daughters raped and murdered. This was a premeditated crime in which both criminals (that is way too nice of a name for them) were caught leaving the house in the family van. Both blamed the other, yet there were phone calls alluding to both being in on the act and both were given a trial of their peers.

This is truly the story of Bill Petit and how he dealt with losing his whole family while he was half dead, losing 5 to 7 pints of blood, tied up in his basement, hearing little, while his family was dying just above him.

It was a very interesting read and it's hard to say that it was enjoyable due to the circumstances. So I will just say that it was an uplifting read which I am glad that I read.

Thanks to Blogging for Books and Crown Publishers for providing me this tragic, but rememberable book in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Carol says**

Ryan D'Agostino's The Rising: Murder, Heartbreak, And the Power Of Human Resilience In An American Family is certainly not his story. It is one that has been entrusted to his care, an honor allowed of sorts, to be the author to let the world know how Dr. William Petit chose to live after the horrific murder of his wife and two daughters.

*” But he has decided to live, because life abides.”*

Connecticut is made up of 169 towns; many of them small and friendly like that of Cheshire, where the Petit family lived. Dr. Petit's home was on a quiet street, a cul-de-sac, a quiet place, a sanctuary even, a place to build a marriage and raise a family, a place to come home to at the end of a day. Until the dark early hours of one morning when two men broke into this home, beat William Petit with a bat, tied him up, shoved him into the basement and then proceeded to torture and kill his wife, Jennifer Hawke-Petit, his daughters, Michaela and Hayley and then set them and their home on fire. Unimaginable.

You could not live in Connecticut and not know anything about these horrible events. But what you had to wonder is how anyone could endure a loss such as this? How does he go on?

Dr. William Petit has shared his story, the pain, the sorrow and yes, even the laughter and joy. It only feels right that we take the time to read what he has to say. Though the trial of the two murderers is covered, this really is about the man, his family, his friends and that first word of the title, Resilience.

I understand I'm on the road  
Where all that was is gone.  
So where to now, St. Peter?  
Show me which road I'm on.  
--Elton John, "Where to Now St. Peter?",  
from *Tumbleweed Connection*, one of  
Bill Petit's favorite albums

The Petit Family Foundation  
was founded after this senseless tragedy and grew out of the generosity of literally, the world.

*It is our hope, the PETIT FAMILY FOUNDATION goal, that we continue to raise and distribute funds to fulfill our mission to help educate young people especially those with interests in science, to help support those with chronic illnesses, and to help protect those affected by violence. We have all seen the many great things which have been inspired by the lives and memory of JENNIFER, HAYLEY, and MICHAELA PETIT, which enable us in turn to follow their example to help more and more people each year. This is a tall order, and we look to all who care to help us attain these goals."*

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### **Harvey Smith says**

A very well written, and very readable story of a family tragedy, and the renewal of the life of the husband father.

A doctor and his wife and two daughters lived in Connecticut. One night, two armed men broke into their house, almost killed the husband with a baseball bat. They then raped the wife and strangled her, and fastened the two girls to their beds, and burned the body of the mother, and the two girls in the house. The husband was restrained in the basement of the home, but broke free and crawled to a neighbors to get the police. He was the only survivor.

The story was how this all affected him and his remaining family, and how he barely coped with recovering from it.

He then at a much later date meets a 20 year younger woman, falls in love, and remarries.

Truly a story of the willful recovery of a human from a tragic situation. Excellent, and true.

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### **Jane says**

This is very difficult to read. The graphic details are horrific. The question the book poses is: how does someone whose wife and two daughters were killed (and he was beaten and left for dead in the cellar) go on?

I had to skip a lot of it and inadvertently read something I wish I had never read.

In any event, this paints a portrait of a man who against all odds has managed to carve out a new life. He is still haunted, of course, and that battle will never be over.

The author did the absolute best he could to describe what it is like to be laughing and acting normally, and suddenly fall silent, lost in past horror.

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### **Rachel says**

Without demeaning or diminishing any of what Bill Petit endured, this book gets a touch sycophantic in moments. D'Agostino is a tremendous writer and the writing is never dry or dull--I plowed through this--but I wish the focus had been wider. Still, I look forward to whatever D'Agostino writes next.

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### **Linda Lipko says**

The Rising: Murder, Heartbreak, and the Power of Human Resilience in an...

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### **Paul says**

This is more than a true-crime book. It's in the tradition of Capote's *In Cold Blood*, and while not written to that level of genius, it's a far more complete narrative of the Petit family murders in Cheshire Conn., than any other book I've read involving murder. This book starts with three horrible murders and the recovery of the fourth victim, Bill Petit, from what his attackers had assumed was a fatal beating with baseball bat.

The slow coming to terms of the loss of his wife and two daughters took much of the life out of Bill Petit for three or four years--he couldn't sleep at night for memories of the horrible terrors that had befallen his family. He had been a prominent doctor, but he couldn't return to his old job after the beating/murders. Instead, he rebuilt his life by creating the Petit Foundation, which supports battered women, wellness, a group of knitters, and many other groups too varied to name. The tragedy of his life, and his efforts to have his life mean something again, have resulted in massive donations to the Petit Foundation, which hopes to become self-sustaining.

The book talks about the dedication foundation keeppeople sending money in--including kids who have just had birthdays, in the place of birthday gifts. The story of the horrifying tragedy and Bill Petit's resolve to start a foundation that would aid victims like his wife and two daughters is a recovery story that inspires everyone who hears it.

The writing in this book, by an editor/writer at Esquire, is superior to the great run of true-crime books. I would recommend it for anyone who wants to see how bitter tragedy can be transformed into a foundation donating money out of love.

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### **Susan Walker says**

This is not a book about a horrible crime. This is an amazing book about the human spirit. The story of what Bill Petit went thru, losing his wife and daughters to torture and murder, being nearly beaten to death can be a hard read at times. But keep going because the recovery process is so worth the read.

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### **Armand says**

This is a very well-written, compelling book about a man who lost his family in a crime so evil and despicable it's almost beyond belief. I devoured it in about three hours. I highly recommend it.

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### **Bob Schnell says**

Advanced Reading Copy review Due to be published September 15, 2015

I really wish this story had been written by a different author with a different style. The central tragic crime and the surviving victim's struggles surely deserve better. Imagine "In Cold Blood" as written by Kathie Lee Gifford. The author, Ryan D'Agostino, relies on a narrative style that is part grade school documentary voice-over ("Hayley was beautiful and Otis was handsome, and they were both athletic and intelligent and confident, but they were still teenagers, and being a teenager isn't easy for anybody") and an inner train of thought monologue ("What to do? This is bad. So what to do? What's the strategy? Yell? Be quiet? He decides to stay quiet"). When he uses actual quotes and describes events he witnessed, the writing improves at least to a newspaper reporter level.

I did manage to learn a lot about the infamous crime and its aftermath. Dr. Petit's ability to rise above the horror of losing his home and family due to criminal violence is inspirational. I just didn't need to be told repeatedly and inanely how much he suffered and how miraculous his recovery was.

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### **Mark says**

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he

may devour."

-1 Peter 5:8

"Bill is trying every day to claw his way back into a world he's not even sure he wants to live in. The end of the world visited a loving family in a small Connecticut town one night, and he alone survived it. Damaged almost beyond repair, but alive."

In July of 2007, armed intruders, broke into a suburban Connecticut home, bludgeoned Dr. Bill Petit, while he slept and then tortured and killed his wife and daughters. They finished it off, by setting the house aflame. Bill managed to escape, through a basement door, badly injured and completely unaware, of what had happened to his family.

Obviously, this is a horrific scenario, something beyond our worst imagining, but the author does not sensationalize. He turns this dark story into a survivor's tale. It takes a few years, but Bill begins to build a new life.

It is well-researched and well-written. I know this will spook many readers but if you can handle the real-life horror, give this one a try.

"...he has decided to live, because life abides."

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### **Connie says**

It was ok, but not enough background on the perpetrators and their reasons for this crime. I realize the author focused solely on the victim and his resilience in the aftermath, but the book lacked suspense and insight on why this all happened. It wasn't a thriller and more like a narrative of this man's life.

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### **Sharon says**

I was given an electronic copy of *The Rising: Murder, Heartbreak, and the Power of Human Resilience in an American Town* by Crown Publishing and NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review.

This true crime novel chronicles the brutal home invasion of the Petit family on July 23, 2007. Although Bill Petit was able to slip his bindings and escape to a neighbor for help, his wife Jennifer and daughters Hayley and Michaela perished. The author asks what he feels is an essential question: how is Bill, the sole survivor of this family tragedy, able to start a memorial foundation three years later with no outward appearance of grief?

Bill learned at a young age the value of hiding your feelings and just doing what needs to be done. He was a quiet leader throughout his childhood and teenage years and always had a fun loving and outgoing personality. This was all important training for the darkest period in his life - not only the loss of his family, but the subsequent trials of the two suspects.

Although *The Rising* is a true crime novel, it reads more like a piece in a magazine. In the first half of the book, the author seems more focused on making sure the reader knows how well respected Bill is, instead of

being centered on the promises made in the title. The actual crime, subsequent capture, and trial of the suspects has the feel of a documentary with voice over commentary. The dispassionate telling of this tragedy and its aftermath make it difficult to feel engaged in the story and its outcome. As I read the final page, I was struck by how much *The Rising* felt like a news program, with the human interest part of the story overwhelming the true crime aspects.

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### **Judie says**

On July 23, 2007, it seemed that Dr. Bill Petit's life was over. Two men broke into his small-town Connecticut house while he was asleep. They brutally attacked him, beating him on his head, then tied him to a pole in the basement to die. They then began a seven-hour rampage of torture against his wife, who one of the men raped and then strangled, and two daughters, ages seventeen and eleven, raping the younger one, when they couldn't find any money in the house. Afterwards, they set the house on fire. Bill managed to escape to roll to a neighbor's house before the men set the house on fire. Though severely injured, Bill survived. His wife and daughters died.

The men were quickly captured in the minivan they stole from the house. Bill's life was in ruins. The community was in shock.

While *THE RISING* concentrates quite a bit on the events of the night and the trials of the two perpetrators, it also provides some background on the Petit family and, to a lesser degree, on how Bill was able to deal with the aftermath. It provides much information about the first trial. I wish it had more about the second one.

Bill was raised to give back to the community through both his work (he was an endocrinologist) and volunteer work. His wife and daughters also volunteered in numerous capacities. Throughout his life, he was always in control and kept his emotions hidden. After their deaths, he learned more about the caring actions of his daughters, things they never told him. The community pulled together to help him heal as did donations from strangers throughout the country who heard his story.

His facade eventually broke down somewhat during the first trial and enabled him to begin to move on with his life in a stronger position.

The book offers hope and a way to possibly deal with a major tragedy. It also has a few lines of humor. For example, it tells that his wife told one man she was a pediatric nurse; he replied she could probably give him a great foot rub.

There are some areas that seem extraneous. An example is when it mentions that he once dated a girl named Wendy. All the children in the family had the names of the Darling family in Peter Pan.

It is a fast-read, but not an easy one because of the subject matter. The author is a professional journalist working primarily in the magazine area. Some parts are taken from articles he had published earlier. That might explain why there is a lot of repetition which is one of the main reasons I have given the book only three stars.

I received an uncorrected proof of the book from LibraryThing. Some things may have been changed by the time the final version was printed. I also hope the final version includes some photographs of the family. They, along with photos shown at the trial, are available on-line.

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