



Facing the Wind: A True Story of Tragedy and Reconciliation

By Julie Salamon

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Robert and Mary Rowe's second child, Christopher, was born with severe neurological and visual impairments. For many years, the Rowes' courageous response to adversity set an example for other parents of children with birth defects. Then the pressures on Bob Rowe—personal and professional—took their toll, and he fell into depression and, ultimately, delusion. And one day he took a baseball bat and killed his wife and three children. Julie Salamon deftly avoids sensationalism as she tells the Rowes' tragic story with intelligence, sympathy, and insight. Like all great literary journalism, *Facing the Wind* asks us to join its issues and examine our own lives and problems in the new, bright light that good writing always sheds.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This true-crime story reaches beyond the relatively narrow focus of the genre to ask painful and provocative questions about guilt and forgiveness. In 1978, Bob Rowe, an out-of-work Brooklyn lawyer, killed his two sons, his daughter and wife by bashing their heads in with a baseball bat. He was found not guilty by reason of insanity, and after several years in a mental institution was released. He later remarried and had another daughter. Although journalist Salamon (*Net of Dreams*) did not interview Rowe before his death in 1977, this expertly crafted account is informed by diligent research and interviews with his second wife, Colleen, as well as with a women's support group to which Rowe's first wife, Mary, had belonged. This group was made up of mothers whose children, like Rowe's son Christopher, were born with severe physical impairments. One of the strengths of Salamon's sensitive narrative is her depiction of these mothers and how they dealt with the strain of raising disabled children. The Rowe's seemingly good marriage and his deep involvement in Christopher's care made Mary's murder all the more incomprehensible to the women, who never forgave him. Salamon adequately details Rowe's depression and subsequent mental breakdown that preceded the killings. She also describes how he painfully built a new life and found Colleen, who forgave him for his past. After her husband's death, Colleen met with the members of Mary's support group. Salamon provides a riveting account of this meeting, where Colleen attempts to explain why she loved her husband, and the women try to understand how she could forgive him. National publicity. (Apr.) Forecast: Salamon is a contributor to the *New York Times*, so this title will be widely reviewed-and many of those reviews will be highly positive. This book will have legs, and strong blurbs from Ted Conover and Anne Fadiman, among others, will give it a first big step.

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From Library Journal

This is the haunting story of Robert Rowe, a respected lawyer, loving husband, doting father and multiple murderer. It is also the story of the mothers of disabled children who came together at Brooklyn's Industrial Home for the Blind as members of a support group before the heyday of self-help gurus and groups for every affliction. Rowe was one of the few fathers actively involved with the group, and he was highly admired by the mothers. The book reveals Rowe's slide into mental illness, which led to his murdering his entire family, and his journey in life after the murder. For anyone interested in how parents cope with disabled children or how mental illness can strike anyone, this book will be a fascinating read. Well written and heavily researched, it clearly demonstrates Salamon's (*The Christmas Tree*, LJ 9/15/96) prowess and her journalistic roots. Readers will not easily forget this tale. Recommended, especially for true crime/psychology collections. Karen Sandlin Silverman, Ctr. for Applied Research, Philadelphia

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From [The New Yorker](#)

In February, 1978, Bob Rowe, a lawyer and apparently devoted family man, murdered his wife and three children by staving in their skulls with a baseball bat. The Rowes' community was particularly horrified. One of the Rowe children, twelve-year-old Christopher, had been born blind, nearly deaf, and brain-damaged, and Bob and his wife, Mary, seemed to be committed to his welfare. Salamon's book began as a report on a support group that Mary had belonged to; then Bob Rowe's crime came up, and it eventually took over the project. There are two narratives here: the shocking crime, and then an equally shocking second act, in which Rowe avoids prison as a result of an insanity plea and starts a new life. Salamon doesn't shy away from the larger questions, both personal and institutional, but, to her great credit, she refuses to entirely abandon her

original subject, and Mary Rowe's friends in the support group serve as a kind of Greek chorus.
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