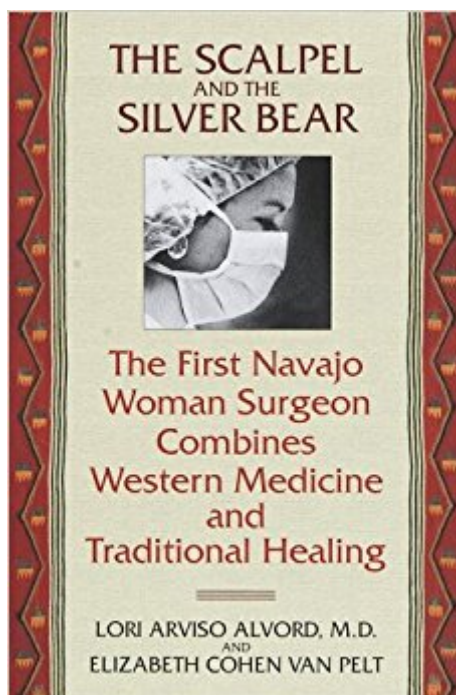


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The Scalpel And The Silver Bear



Synopsis

In a remarkable book that takes the reader on a spellbinding journey between two worlds, surgeon Lori Arviso Alvord describes her struggles to bring modern medicine to the Navajo reservation in Gallup, New Mexico—and to bring the values of her people to a medical care system in danger of losing its heart. Finding the solutions to modern medicine's most daunting problems was far from the mind of a girl from a small, dusty town on a Navajo reservation. But Lori Arviso Alvord would leave the traditional hogans of her people to attend the prestigious Stanford University Medical School and become the first Navajo woman surgeon. Only after conquering the high-tech realm of the operating room would this extraordinarily talented doctor realize something was missing from contemporary medical care—an understanding of the whole person who has come seeking healing. *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear* tells of Dr. Alvord's pioneering journey to become a woman surgeon, fighting the odds presented by her own culture and the unspoken rules that made surgery the territory of a privileged class of males. Then, having accomplished her dreams, the strong-willed young woman would find herself faced with a different challenge: learning another approach to medicine amid the Hataali, the medicine men of the Diné, the people we call Navajo. Here in this moving, enlightening, and provocative volume, Dr. Alvord teaches us how she merged the latest breakthroughs of science and methodology with the ancient tribal paths to recovery and wellness. In dramatic encounters while practicing reservation medicine—a man whose intestine was pierced by a porcupine quill, which he insisted was placed there by an enemy's curse; a woman who had been struck by lightning and blamed her cancer on it; an all-night winter sing for a gravely ill young woman, attended by the whole community—Dr. Alvord witnessed the power of belief to influence health, for good or for ill. She discovered that patients undergoing chemotherapy did better after having a native healer at bedside, and that the feelings of both the patient and the surgeon could affect recovery time, postsurgical complications, and even whether the patient lived or died. The secret, Lori Alvord discovered, lay in the Navajo philosophy of a balanced and harmonious life, called "Walking in Beauty." Her sharing of these ancient principles promises to have an immeasurable impact on today's doctors and patients by expanding the concept of mind-body healing to include the interconnectedness of all life. Personal, simply written, yet profoundly wise, *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear* joins those few rare works, such as *Healing and the Mind*, whose ideas have changed medical practices and our understanding of the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When Alvord, who is half Navajo, dissected her first cadaver, she broke an important rule in her culture: "Navajos do not touch the dead. Ever." In the process of becoming a "white man's doctor," Alvord discovered that among the indigenous customs her medical training forced her to ignore were valuable healing practices that are sorely needed in allopathic medicine. In this inspiring memoir, Alvord, assisted by Van Pelt, describes her endeavors to integrate a Navaho approach to healing with high-tech medical procedures. She left the pueblo at age 16 to attend Dartmouth on scholarship, survived the numbing vicissitudes of surgical training at Stanford and returned home jubilantly to work as a general surgeon at the local medical center, only to discover that her demeanor and her state-of-the-art skills frightened her patients. Working within her traditional culture, which strongly resists the removal of organs from the body, she soon realized that a trusting relationship with the patient and harmony in the operating room were as necessary as the correct procedure to the success of the operation and the recovery process. As an introduction to Navajo healing principles, this short book offers intriguing ideas about humane health care. While it is unlikely that many physicians will embrace the sacred bear spirit, which is a source of strength and courage for the author, Alvord's message about how to improve a patient's peace of mind is utterly credible. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

YA-Alvord takes readers on an absorbing journey straddling two worlds. Her book, written with journalist Van Pelt, describes her path to eventual success in combining highly technical, modern medicine with the traditional Navajo philosophy of balance and harmony known as "Walking in

Beauty." Born to a white mother and Navajo father, Alvord spent her childhood in Crownpoint, NM, on the edge of the Navajo reservation. As a child, she was encouraged to read and dream. She went to Dartmouth University on a scholarship, and then medical school at Stanford University. When she returned to New Mexico to practice medicine at the Gallup Indian Medical Center, she soon realized that her patients were frightened of her manner and technical ability and that she needed to merge her state-of-the-art skills with her traditional culture. This inspiring memoir, filled with wit and intelligence, discusses issues and ideas relevant to all cultures. The result is a book that is provocative and deeply felt. Readers will gain insight into a remarkable world and a remarkable person. Susanne Bardelson, Wheat Ridge Public Library, Jefferson County, CO
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Dr. Arviso Alvord incorporates the wisdom of traditional healing with western medicine. Her story about how the hantavirus was found when the CDC could not find the vector for the disease is very much reason to keep contact with traditional healers around the world and to refrain from the reductionistic and often dismissive nature of western medicine's approach to healing.

[Non-fiction] This is an inciteful, first person account by Dr. Lori Arviso Alvord of her professional journey toward becoming the first Navajo woman surgeon and her experiences as a practicing physician. It is thoughtful, rendering a picture of contrasts between two cultures and suggesting a constructive blending of traditional healing and western medicine that recognizes the humanity of the patient. During my daughter's medical training, she spent a summer in the Dakotas with the Indian Health Service and I could readily hear echos of Dr. Alvord's story in my daughter's experience. At less than 200 pages, I would recommend this honest, but very pleasant, read that provides a broadening perspective.

The story of an indigenous woman entering a predominantly white, male profession was riveting. Her point of view informed by her Native American heritage is such a valuable contribution to the medical care of her patients.

Took me back to my days on the Navajo reservation in the 1970's. Very interesting reading, paralleled many of my experiences with those wonderful people.

A classic that should be read by all young men and women, especially Native Americans. Makes a

great gift for a high school student, especially one who may be considering medicine.

While it is a delightful story, it is overly long and repeats the theme of adapting treatment to culture dozens of times throughout the narrative.

Great book! Definitely a must read for those going into healthcare. The condition of the book was as good as new.

An interesting, easy, quick read! Learned a lot about the Navajo culture. Great storyteller!

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