

# The Story Behind This Book

MY FIRST HUSBAND, Jack Spigarelli, wrote the first edition of *Crisis Preparedness Handbook* (CPH) in the early '80s, when we were facing 14 percent mortgage rates, soaring gasoline prices, and near double-digit inflation. Nuclear war with the Soviet Union threatened, unrest in the Middle East was on the rise, and the government had lost its credibility following the Vietnam War and Watergate.

As the father of our young family, Jack felt responsible and, I think, vulnerable. So he decided to prepare us for the uncertainties and crises he felt certain lay ahead. His planning became an almost evangelical passion he felt compelled to share with others.

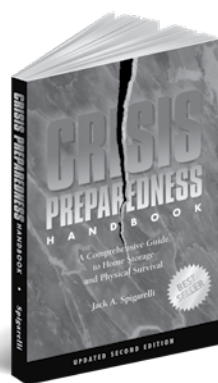
With a vision of what he wanted to accomplish, Jack left his real-world professional job and began the process of researching and writing CPH. I was with him the whole way. I don't know how we did it. With four small children, it wasn't feasible for me to work outside the home, but we were somehow able to make our savings of six months stretch into more than a year. Then we juggled finances and borrowed and begged, and a few friends helped us out. Our dedication to self-reliance and the preparedness lifestyle helped us get through that difficult financial period. For a while, Jack put writing the book on hold and got a job, but compelled to finish it, he came back to it after a few months.

As his chief sounding board, editor, adviser, and critic, I read his drafts, questioned his assertions, and added my two cents. But my biggest job was testing the survival equipment Jack recommended—water filters, emergency lighting, grain mills, outdoor gear. I became a bit of an expert on using stored wheat and powdered milk, learned to dehydrate fruits and vegetables, and experimented until I could grow a productive vegetable garden.

After an incredible amount of sacrifice, CPH was completed in 1984. Back then it was extremely difficult to market a self-published book. With our meager budget, we placed a few ads in national survival magazines. CPH received favorable reviews from leaders in the tiny survival industry and managed to sell over five hundred copies. But that wasn't enough to sustain our family, so Jack again looked to other pursuits, though his passion for preparedness was never far from his heart and mind.

## Nobody Is Immune

Fast-forward to the tragedy of September 11, 2001. Forever etched in our minds, it heightened everyone's concern about the safety of our world. Jack decided it was time to offer his survival expertise in an updated CPH. He spent about a year revising and getting it ready to market. By this time, Amazon was becoming the seller of books and a self-published book could more easily make its presence known on the market.



Second edition of best-selling *Crisis Preparedness Handbook*, first published in 1984

In 2005, Jack started getting orders from Amazon and selling to bookstores, as well as through our website. Then, on May 5, the unthinkable happened. Jack died from an aortic aneurysm. Crisis and survival became real for me and my family. The sorrow, emotional trauma, and upheaval were almost unbearable. But somehow we were able to manage, not only because of the people who came forward, but largely because I had been raised to be resilient and Jack and I had lived a self-reliant lifestyle. One of the ways I coped was by continuing to work as a schoolteacher. It was a relief to focus on my students. I will ever be grateful for those who compassionately listened and cheered me on.

In time I began reflecting on Jack's dream. The July 2005 bombings in London, the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, and the economic upheaval of 2008 increased demand for the book. With a heightened awareness of how fragile our world is, people wanted to know how they could be prepared. Over the next five years, nearly forty thousand copies of *Crisis Preparedness Handbook* were sold!

I felt his book would benefit from a fresh editing and decided to update the content and make the text more reader-friendly. In 2015, I began this task in earnest.

### Being Prepared Brings Peace

As I thought about what our readers really needed, I discovered that my voice and thoughts and intentions were different from Jack's. Before long I was doing more than making a few revisions. I was rewriting and, more importantly, repurposing the book. Jack's intent was to help people prepare for what he considered an inevitable breakdown of society. My complementary goal is to help you get through the kind of crises you see happening on the news—huge events when they happen to us personally but which, with the right preparation can lessen the suffering until we again find normalcy in our lives.

It's highly likely that everyone will have to endure crises at some point. I've survived a hurricane; come-to-a-standstill snowstorms; a house fire; minor earthquakes; how-will-we-pay-the-mortgage struggles; and, most profoundly, Jack's death. I have seen in-laws deal with three feet of floodwater in their home and a dear friend and her family evacuate during a wildfire. And most recently, we've experienced a worldwide pandemic. While, understandably, there has been uncertainty, sorrow, loneliness, anxiety, and panic, I want you to know you can feel the peace and confidence that comes with being prepared.

This updated third version of *Crisis Preparedness Handbook* offers a broader vision of what it means to be prepared. Frankly, there is enough division and polarization, animosity and intolerance in our world in 2020 to make a societal breakdown conceivable, but CPH teaches you how to be prepared for temporary disasters and personal crises so that instead of being life-threatening, many crises may be reduced to minor inconveniences.

—Patricia Spigarelli Aston