

The Book Nook

Farewell, My Friend

Review by CH
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SACRAMENTO—*Farewell, My Friend*, by **Beatrice Toney Bailey**, does what its subtitle says—guides its reader in the handling of the serious illness or even death of a loved one. In doing so, **Bea Bailey** delivers an informational and inspirational manual that helps to demystify the puzzling challenges a patient and care provider face.

Normally this subject is considered dark and depressing. However, **Bailey's** style is lively and conversational, spirited and humorous. So despite dealing with a heavy topic, she is able to help us talk calmly about the reality of end-of-life issues. The net result is the reader will go from a position of crisis to one of empowerment.

Bailey's writing is very personal. Less than a year after her husband died of cancer, she felt that she had learned too much not to share it and help others navigate the reality and emotionality of end of life. She has practical advice for the couple: do those things you still can do, like some travel, or some favorite activities, like going to a movie, or doing shopping.

The design of *Farewell, My Friend* is friendly—a readable font, good spacing, 8½ x 11" page size, pictures and illustrations, and suggestions for and examples of forms to organize lists, which are also available on-line. With these lists made or actions taken, the care provider is in greater control and relieved of some of the anxious torment of not knowing what to do first—a problem encountered by even the best-organized people. Thus, what Bailey does is help the reader shift from a crisis mode to one of more control over the entire process.

Bailey provides many little hints to make life easier and tips to give the care provider more control over everything from medical appointments to preparing meals and sorting out finances. Her point is that the caregiver's survival depends upon the amount of information at hand. She gives so much—for example, ideas about how to organize and classify the myriad of professionals the caregiver will deal with and how to get in touch with them. Keep in a notebook, the private telephone number of a doctor, rather than allowing yourself to be put on hold or shunted to people who cannot help you with your question. When you get in touch with the person, have available from a journal the necessary information, such as the symptoms which you are calling about which you need to know how to control. **Bailey** tells, often with a wry comment, about dealing with healthcare professionals who may not be appropriate for the patient's personality and how to request change. She relates how helpful hospice was in her husband's care.

During the time a patient's condition is deteriorating, you may need to make pre-need arrangements for a funeral service and to find the costs, or write the obituary, or contact friends who need to come from a distance. Legal concerns—a will and advanced healthcare directive—are discussed as well as the intricacies of insurance, Social Security and military benefits, if applicable. (With all of these, your need to document names and numbers of the people you talked with, is highlighted so you can easily follow up with further questions as they arise.)

The author reminds the reader of aspects of the legal and financial matters that need to be handled, as well as some of the challenges of dealing with well-meaning but morose advice-giving friends, people best avoided. She also stresses the importance of keeping oneself in good shape so as to have enough energy to deal with the patient as well as to ward off the hazards of self-pity. She also cites literature and resources which may be helpful.

Bailey takes us on this emotional trip with the courage of deep religious faith. Her humor shines through in relating sometimes hilarious family vignettes, and helps make her advice, when given, authentic.

More information on the author can be found on her website, farewellmyfriend.net. 

