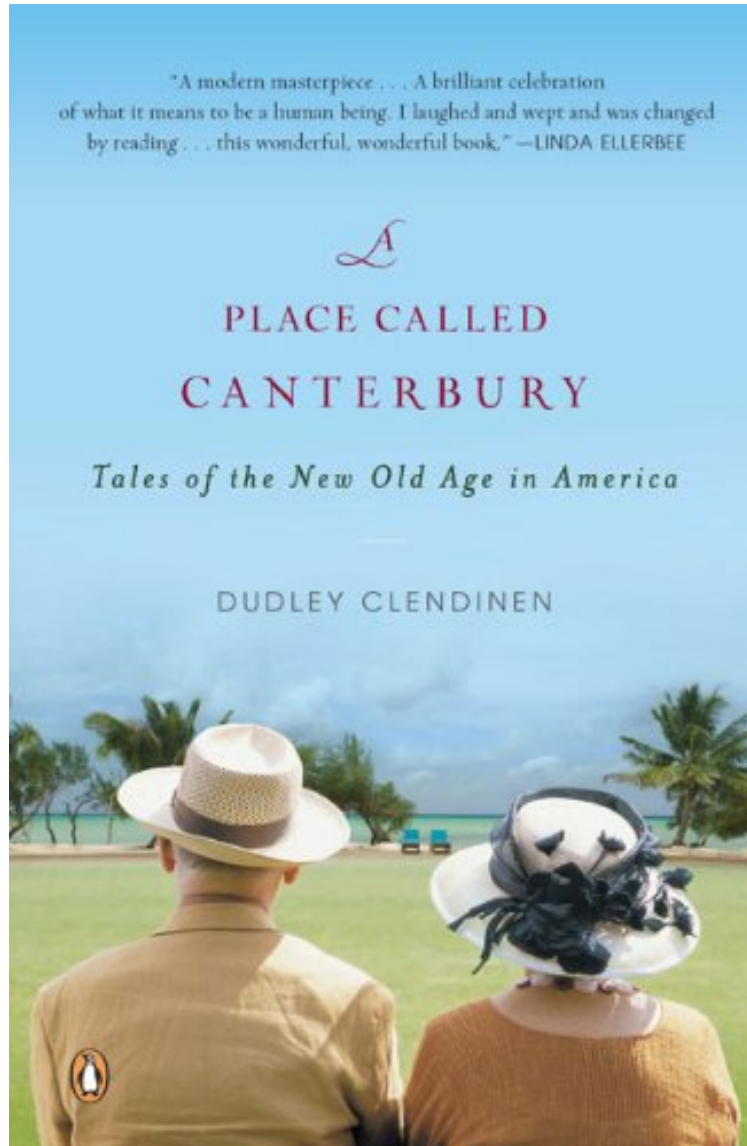


(Download) A Place Called Canterbury: Tales of the New Old Age in America

A Place Called Canterbury: Tales of the New Old Age in America

Dudley Clendinen

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Dudley Clendinen : A Place Called Canterbury: Tales of the New Old Age in America before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Place Called Canterbury: Tales of the New Old Age in America:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Clendinen nailed it...By Elizabeth H. CottrellMy 87-year-old mother, herself a resident with my father in an upscale residential community in Virginia much like the Canterbury of this book, raved about this book. I wasn't disappointed, and it rang true with my experience with my parents and their

dear friends. I highly recommend it for anyone who's considering retirement community living or anyone who has loved ones living in such a facility. The author, a writer and journalist, brings his skills of observation and story-telling to this delightful account of his mother's life at a high-end retirement facility in Tampa, Florida. He actually moved into the community himself while his mother was sick and spent days or weeks at a time there off and on over a period of years, so he had an unusual perspective as an insider. He befriended many of the other residents and was able to share many wonderful conversations about life there and the challenges of aging after what, for most there, had been an interesting and vibrant life. Humorous eccentricities and annoying habits of his mother and her friends are part of the story, and I felt the author handled these tenderly but accurately. The biographical sketches of many residents were delightful and interesting history lessons, not only about personal and world events, but also about the residents' insights on the culture of their childhood, the changes that had taken place during the span of their lives, and their opinions about modern society and relationships. One of the more dramatic stories was the daring escape of a Jewish rabbi and his wife from Nazi Germany, after most avenues of escape had disappeared. This excerpt captures the tone of Clendinen's tale as he recounts a visit with her mother in the nursing home wing after her faculties were severely diminished: "She was present. I was present. She was glad. We would make the best of it. I think that may be the credo of the place. Canterbury is filled with people who have come to understand the importance of living in the present moment with as little expectation---and as much satisfaction---as they can." A bit more editing could have removed some sections that rambled unnecessarily, but overall, I was impressed with the author's compassionate and honest portrayal of these interesting people, most of whom faced aging and failing health with intelligence, humor, and creativity, not to mention a fierce determination to hang on to their independence and dignity as long as humanly possible. He clearly loved them and made us love them too.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not the magic I was hoping for

By Linda C. Wright

While in Maine, I struck up a conversation with a man getting out of a car with Florida license plates. I was, after all in Maine, a very long way from my home in Florida and he was too. We were probably neighbors. The man said he lived in Tampa and we exchanged niceties. How we got to the subject of moving our elderly relatives into assisted living, I'm not sure. My vacation in Maine hadn't yet relieved the migraine headache of moving my 92 year old step mother, June, into a place she didn't want to have anything to do with. I'd had a very stressful summer. He was in the midst of the same scenario with his elderly mother. We told each other our war stories. He mentioned A Place Called Canterbury since it's about a place in Tampa and his mother had recently moved there. I was still looking for the magic wand that would make this stage of life calm and wonderful for my step mother, so I downloaded the book as soon as I got back home. The first paragraph started by saying that Dudley's mother had relented and agreed to sell her home and move to Canterbury. June on the other hand, went kicking and screaming. My sister and I employed all kinds of tricks and told oodles of white lies during the time it took to extract her from her apartment. We never knew we were even capable of saying such things, especially to someone we loved and respected. While she wasn't our mother, we'd known her for over 50 years. The word "relented" shut me down from the start. This whole process would have been easy if June had only chosen to accept that she needed more care.

A Place Called Canterbury did have some bits of brilliance. I laughed out loud in some parts and cried in others. I understood Mr. Clendinen's pain at watching his mother hang on to life even when time after time, the doctor or nurse had told him the end was near. And I especially enjoyed Sweetso, who continued to smoke even when she was told not to. June loved to say she never had a cigarette she didn't enjoy. If 70 years of smoking hadn't killed her yet, I doubt that it would. Sweetso felt the same way.

Mainly however, I found this story very disconnected. The backstory became long and laborious, taking me away from the real story of people who have lost their purpose in the later years of their lives. I skimmed alot. I couldn't find the magic wand I'd so desperately been searching for. I know in my heart that there's no simple answer. But if A Placed Called Canterbury can help anyone else in this situation, then that is magic enough for me.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Canterbury tales...

By Jill Meyer

In July, 2011, I read a remarkable piece in the New York Times, written by a former NYT writer named Dudley Clendinen. Clendinen wrote with great strength and grace about his life since being diagnosed, in his mid-60's, with ALS. He referred to his disease as "Lou", and described the hard times he's endured, but he also writes about the love and warmth he has received from family and friends since his diagnosis. He ended his piece on as upbeat a note as he could, saying what a good life he's lived in his 66 years. And in the article, he refers to a book he had written a couple of years ago called "A Place Called Canterbury: Tales of the New Old Age in America". Curious about the subject and impressed by Clendinen's writing in the New York Times piece, I ordered and read the book.

Part memoir and part social study, Clendinen examines life on both a micro and macro level at a geriatric apartment and health care center in Tampa. The place is real - the Canterbury - and Clendinen writes about life there from the late 1990's til 2007, years which spanned the time of his own mother's stay and eventual death at the age of 92. Commuting from his home in Baltimore, Clendinen spent weeks at a time in Tampa and basically lived in a friend's unit at the facility. The "micro" level he looks at was his mother and the "macro" is at the rest of the community of inmates (as they referred to themselves) and staff. Using real names and personal histories, Clendinen gives his readers a look into a part of the "New Old Age". He doesn't stint on writing about how the ongoing realities of the weaknesses of age bring a once-vibrant person down to a shell of his former self, as shown by the last few years of his mother's life. But he also writes how old age does bring

an acceptance of the past and how many parts of life are brought into a sharper focus as extraneous memories are pared down to those which make a life worth remembering. Clendinen knew many of the residents of the Canterbury already as they had been part of his parents' social circle in Tampa. He looks at the lives of these members of "The Greatest Generation", and writes how they were both influenced by and, in turn, influenced their times. Dudley Clendinen has written a masterful book. For a more clinical look at "the new old age", see Jane Gross's newly published book, "The Bittersweet Season". Both are excellent reading.

An "affectionate, touchingly empathetic" (Janet Maslin, The New York Times) look at old age in America today. Welcome to Canterbury Tower, an apartment building in Florida, where the residents are busy with friendships, love, sex, money, and gossip—and the average age is eighty-six. Journalist Dudley Clendinen's mother moved to Canterbury in 1994, planning—like most the inhabitants—to spend her final years there. But life was not over yet for the feisty southern matron. There, she and her eccentric new friends lived out a soap opera of dignity, nerve, and humor otherwise known as the New Old Age. *A Place Called Canterbury* is both a journalist's account of the last years of the Greatest Generation and a son's rueful memoir of his mother. Entertaining and unsparing, it is essential reading for anyone with aging parents, and those wondering what their own old age might look like.

From Publishers Weekly Former New York Times reporter Clendinen tells how he persuaded his frail mother to sell her house and move to Canterbury Tower in Florida, a geriatric apartment building where many of her friends already lived. With caring staff, a swimming pool, spacious apartments and cocktail parties, the place seemed almost idyllic, and Mother (as the author refers to her) spent her first four years there in a whirl of social activities. But in 1998, the 83-year-old suffered a stroke and eventually moves into the nursing wing, finally succumbing in early 2007. Around this central narrative, Clendinen spins other stories and observations about the lifestyles of the new old age. He also describes how his mother's old friends ignored her completely when she was wheeled into the apartment tower for a cabaret after her stroke and his painful decision to withdraw her medications. Overall, Clendinen offers a mixed bag, with some stories coming across as poignant and others depressing, in need of some larger meaning which could have been found, perhaps, in either Clendinen's own alluded-to midlife crisis or a more robust discussion of senior care. (May) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist The new old age is one of longer lives and greater independence until the prospects of dementia and infirmity set in. Clendinen, a former New York Times reporter, began chronicling this journey when, at age 55, he moved into Canterbury Towers, a housing development in Tampa, Florida, where the average occupant is 86 years old. Two years earlier, following the death of his father, his mother moved there and then suffered a debilitating stroke. The Canterbury was like a good apartment hotel, a very adult camp, a tribal quarters, or some kind of club for the elderly, spunky, and vague. Canterbury Towers included apartments for independent elderly and a nursing wing for those in failing health. It also included a delicious and lively array of social relationships and activities, from residents' visits with their own parents well into their 100s to dining, dancing, romance, and arguments, in other words, the broad range of human existence. Clendinen tackles the great confused mess of elderly care from the personal perspective of his mother's widowhood and aging, putting faces and emotions to a complex issue. --Vanessa Bush "One of the most enjoyable and important books to cross our desks this year. Beautifully written . . . moving and humorous. Invaluable for anyone grappling with the challenges and opportunities in later life." -The Wall Street Journal "A book that stands apart from so much of what is being written about aging in this country." -The Baltimore Sun