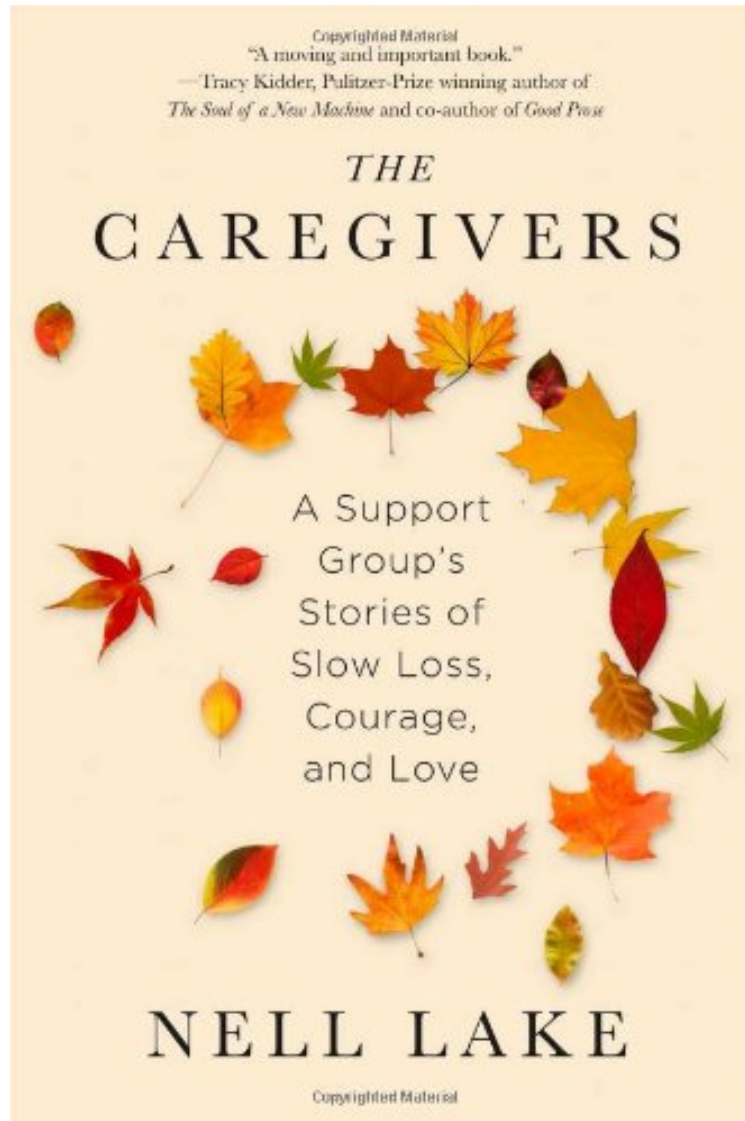


# The Caregivers: A Support Group's Stories of Slow Loss, Courage, and Love

Nell Lake

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**Nell Lake : The Caregivers: A Support Group's Stories of Slow Loss, Courage, and Love** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Caregivers: A Support Group's Stories of Slow Loss, Courage, and Love:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The Caregivers is a most important book!By Elaine M. ChittendenThis is Nell Lake's first novel and if we are lucky there will be many more. The story is told via many true

stories documenting over a 1/2 dozen incredible caregivers and their "caregivees" on the front lines of an inevitable journey that all of us will make (because everyone gets to trade in their life). The caregivers in this book are not health care professionals (except for Sarah), and for the most part they simply help each other (as did Nell without "going native") navigate the medical, legal, financial and very emotional daily challenges that make caregiving a blessing and a curse. Regardless of your view on end of life issues, including suicide by your own hand or that of another ("assisted suicide" etc.), thriving or lingering at home or a nursing home under the loving care of loved ones or paid loved ones earning their living, this is THE book that might hopefully begin The Conversation for you and those closest to you. By The Conversation, I mean developing a guide for those left or chosen to be responsible for a loved ones end of life wishes, as in The Five Wishes which can be googled on line. Those of you who would like to become better prepared for the final event in life might do well to read this book and then hope it become a successful movie. Maybe then the topic will influence the critical mass needed to influence the "health care" culture in the U.S.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Important work highlighting an invisible population, beautifully written. By Sarah Rossmassler I read this beautifully written book with great interest. Beginning in the first chapter, the author sets the stage for the rest of the book with the very poignant story of her own grandmother's death. Lake made lasting and deep connections with the people in the caregiver support group she was allowed to be a part of, and then expertly shares those connections with her readers. One is left with a real and intimate knowledge of the stress and impact informal caregivers have in our communities. Lake shares both instances of sadness and grief but as well the humor, lightheartedness and joy that also are a part of the caregiver's lives. As a provider in end of life for elders and people suffering with life-limiting illness, I am grateful for the opportunity to witness caregiver issues up close. As a bonus to the very important message this book imparts, the narrative and writing is fluid, absorbable, and poetic. A joy to read, and an important work in recognizing this vulnerable population.4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A touching tale of hidden heroes By Ruth M Anyone with an aging parent, partner or loved one should read this book. With incredible compassion and a journalistic eye, Nell Lake tells the story of several caregivers grappling with aging, mental illness and death as they care for their loved ones. As the baby boomer generation gets set to retire, this book is an important glimpse into the challenges, and joys, of taking care of those we love.

A gifted writers chronicle of the extraordinary bravery and strength of a group of people who care for loved ones during long, final illnesses. A moving, intimate, and compassionate book that chronicles the experiences of a group of long-term caregivers and illuminates critical issues of old age, end-of-life care, medical reform, and social policy In 2010, journalist Nell Lake began sitting in on the weekly meetings of a local hospitals caregivers support group. Soon members invited her into their lives. For two years, she brought empathy, insight, and an eye for detail to understanding Penny, a fifty-year-old botanist caring for her aging mother; Daniel, a survivor of Nazi Germany who tends his ailing wife; William, whose wife suffers from Alzheimers; and others with whom all caregivers will identify. Witnessing acts of devotion and frustration, lessons in patience and in letting go, Lake illuminates the intimate exchanges of caregiving and careceiving. Her work considers important and timely social issues with humanity, warmth, and concern: How can we care for the aging, ill, and dying with skill and compassion, even as the costs and labors of care increase? How might the medical profession take into account the needs of caregivers as well as patients? Nell Lake understands that broad policy questions are experienced personally, in the daily, difficult but rewarding lives of caregivers everywhere. The Caregivers is a thoughtful and tenderly reported depiction of the real-life predicaments that evoke these crucial questions. With more and more people spending their late years ill and frail, and 43 million Americans caring for family members over age fifty, The Caregivers is an important chronicle of a widely shared experience and a public concern. It offers a humane, realistic, and life-affirming portrait of what it means to give and receive love.

From Booklist What started out as a straightforward research project about a support group for people who provide care for ailing loved ones soon morphed into a far more intimate involvement than journalist Lake anticipated. How could it not? Judging from her sensitive and insightful narrative of their daily fortunes and, more often, misfortunes, the caregivers portrayed here exude a compassionate demeanor that is contagious. Certainly Lakes experience and thus her book are highly relevant. An estimated 17 percent of employed Americans are currently caring for an ailing relative. Of course, reckoning those ubiquitous baby boomers, support groups like this can only grow exponentially more important. And not just due to sheer numbers but also because of the heroism her word that is required to meet the new reality of a parent or spouse slowly slipping away via dementia or Alzheimers. These, then, are snapshots of a new kind of hero. Not a first responder but a constant responder to the shifting needs of an ailing/aging loved one. Its as if Lakes caregivers are saying, Heed our words, and learn. --Donna Chavez A beautifully written account of a year in the life of caregivers...The Caregivers is as elegantly constructed as a novel, but more than that, Lake writes about these people with such warmth and vividness that they feel as memorable as our favorite fictional characters. In sharing these stories with readers, Lake has written a book that bears witness to their necessary, intimate, private heroism. (Kate Tuttle The Boston Globe) A penetrating glimpse into the modern world of caregiving Lake shines as a

storyteller Her sympathetic portrayals are touching and thought-provoking, but Lake is at her best when examining the place and character of caregiving in today's society. Those who are currently caregivers will find in Lake's subjects understanding and compassion, just as they share with each other in the context of the support group. (Kirkus) A chronicle of the extraordinary bravery and strength of a group of people who care for loved ones during long, final illnesses. (Publishers Weekly) An elegantly written and thoughtful book that considers one of the biggest of the Big Questions we face as a society: how do we care for a ballooning aging population, with people living longer but with more health problems? as well as the personal challenges of individuals who care for loved ones who are elderly or infirm. (Maureen Turner Valley Advocate) We are legion, we members of the middle-aged, mostly female caregiver corps, and we work our extra jobs behind the scenes. Since many of us can't seem to summon up the energy to join that support group our friends keep suggesting to us, it's quite canny of writer Nell Lake to provide one in book form. Lake tells a good tale, and just like an actual support group provides comfort in the time-honored form of shared experience: Oh, You've been through that too. (Lynette Lamb Minneapolis Star-Tribune) An intimate portrait. (Susan Kaplan New England Public Radio) Lake offers views into the complexities of caregiving: the profound stress, the upheaval of family roles, the slow, often excruciating grief, as well as the graceful humanity of it all. (Rachel Zimmerman WBUR's CommonHealth blog) This profound study on the effects of tending to ill loved ones offers powerful testimony to friendship and mutual support. (Publishers Weekly) "A moving and important book." (Tracy Kidder Pulitzer-Prize-winning author of *The Soul of a New Machine* and Co-author of *Good Prose*) Virtually every one of us worries about an elderly family member who needs care, or knows we'll be responsible for someone in the future, or fears needing such care someday ourselves. Yet seldom does a fine and thoughtful writer address this subject. Nell Lake's warm and compassionate book fills a gap, speaks to universal anxieties, and lets us know we are not alone. I hope it starts a national conversation. (Adam Hochschild author of *To End All Wars*) *The Caregivers* offers companionship to those shouldering the sudden, complex, asymmetric, and protracted demands of caring for a family member in decline. Kind, and beautifully written, *The Caregivers* shares stories of lives overtaken by this common but often all-too-private, messy, and mandatory generosity. The book is not only a lucid examination of life's closing years, but a celebration of the solace and strength that come to many who accept this burden (Mark Kramer, Writer in Residence, Boston University and author of *Invasive Procedures: A Year in the World of Two Surgeons*) Nell Lake has achieved a remarkable intimacy with the people she writes about, and she repays their trust with this refined and affecting book. In its sensitivity, compassion, and wisdom, it exemplifies the virtues it celebrates. (Richard Todd author of *The Thing Itself*) "Nell Lake's chronicle of some ordinary people who do some extraordinary things is a perfect match of subject and writer. They are inspiring, and so is she." (Daniel Okrent author of *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*) "Nell Lake's *The Caregivers* illuminates a subculture all too easily overlooked and undervalued: the men and women who toil to ease the final days, weeks, and often years of loved ones who need help navigating everything from the simplest activities of daily living to the complexities of transportation, doctors, meds and endless paperwork. In prose that is by turns elegiac, humorous, gritty, and intimate, Lake gives her subjects the one response they so amply deserve and so rarely receive: a deep and abiding respect." (Madeleine Blais, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and author of *Uphill Walkers: A Family Memoir* and *In These Girls, Hope is a Muscle*) About the Author Nell Lake, a journalist and magazine writer, was the founding editor of the *Nieman Narrative Digest* at the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University. She has written for *The Boston Globe*, *Yankee*, *Harvard Magazine*, and other publications, and has reported for public radio. She lives with her family in western Massachusetts.