

Becoming Dead Right: A Hospice Volunteer in Urban Nursing Homes

Frances Shani Parker

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Reviewed by Debra Gaynor for Reader Views (5/07)

Jake was terrified, he heard people that weren't there! He would hear them laughing, screaming and making a ruckus, they always disappeared before he could catch them. They watched, harassed, and stalked him. Over the months Ms. Parker noticed the deterioration of his mind. When he began to exhibit physical signs of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency,) Jake denied his illness. Parker contacted Jake's family but it was obvious they were fed up with his erratic behavior. Seeking medical help for Jake became an important mission for this compassionate woman. Many people treated Jake with contempt. Jake's life became an inspiration influencing Parker's dedication to Hospice.

One day Sam, an acquaintance, sobbed that he had AIDS. Parker accompanied him on doctor visits and offered support by other means. Sam found comfort in a support group by talking with others suffering from the same illness. "Remembering Jake" is a poem from this book. Her words describe the sense of isolation, the dementia, and the deterioration of his body. This poem was also read aloud at the 13th International AIDS Conference (South Africa, July 2000). Jake's plight so affected Frances Parker that she took classes to be a hospice volunteer. Hospice offers support for both the dying patient and his or her family.

Frances Shani Parker is to be applauded for her humanitarian efforts. Her book brings to light the wonderful care hospice offers. Ms Parker is extremely talented. Her work as a volunteer offers a refreshing and educational view. The cover of *Becoming Dead Right* is superbly done. The iridescent blue butterfly speaks of the stages or changes we go through in life. The open hands speak of how we hold each other's well being in our hands. This is poignant book that will touch the lives of many.

I highly recommend this book to those with elderly family and friends. Having first hand knowledge and experience with the assistance that hospice offers; I can personally say that their help is invaluable. Ms Parker has an admirable agenda: she desires to educate others so that they too will volunteer where they are most needed. I highly recommend this book to those with aging family and friends.