

***Living Consciously, Dying Gracefully: A Journey with Cancer and Beyond***

Nancy Manahan and Becky Bohan

Beaver's Pond Press, Inc. (2007)

ISBN 9781592981793

Reviewed by Vicki Landes for Reader Views (1/08)

Nancy Manahan and Becky Bohan team up to write a beautiful tribute to the life of Manahan's deceased sister-in-law in "Living Consciously, Dying Gracefully: A Journey with Cancer and Beyond." The authors hope not only to remember their loved one in print but to share her extraordinary passage from unthinkable diagnosis to dignified death.

"Living Consciously, Dying Gracefully" is the touching story of Diane Manahan – wife, mother, grandmother, sister, colleague, and friend – and her deliberate pathway toward the unavoidable end of her life. Stricken with cancer, Diane received the short gift of remission before the disease returned with a vengeance and ultimately caused her death. Although countless families have had to endure such a painful ordeal, Diane's story brings an enlightened hope and calming peace as she looks at her situation with an unusual perspective. To most, death is the ultimate unknown – terrifying and avoided in conversation. Instead of settling in this mindset, Diane chose to live and love each day to the fullest while openly communicating her final wishes on most of her burial and memorial services.

"Living Consciously, Dying Gracefully" is not only a deeply heartfelt story of a woman's life but a guidebook for those facing similar situations and would like to intentionally leave behind a beautiful legacy. Both Diane's story and the authors' lessons from her life touch the soul and encourage the heart to see death as more than merely 'the end.' Manahan and Bohan write with such emotion and love that I found myself mourning Diane's death but conversely, rejoicing in her conscious life. They perfectly capture this woman's spirit with their style, one which brightly radiates from each page.

Since death is inevitable for everyone "Living Consciously, Dying Gracefully" is a book many adults will find of great interest, especially those having to watch a loved one suffer from a terminal illness. Further, those undergoing a disease themselves and wanting to approach their deaths with more purpose would also greatly benefit from reading this book. I found that the most profound aspect of Manahan and Bohan's writing was that Diane – a non-violent person – didn't view her treatments as a 'fight,' a 'war' going on between her medicine and the invading cells, or that she was a victim of cancer. Instead and more positively, she was simply living with cancer – a peaceful journey full of love and mature acceptance even during her conventional and complementary therapies.

"Living Consciously, Dying Gracefully" is probably the most profound book on death I've ever read. Manahan and Bohan present a beautiful story of their loved one while offering hope to others that may be facing similar circumstances. A life lesson for anyone wanting to leave a more powerful heritage behind, "Living Consciously, Dying Gracefully" tugs at the heartstrings, lifts the spirit, and pulls the conscious mind towards a more meaningful life and dignified ending.