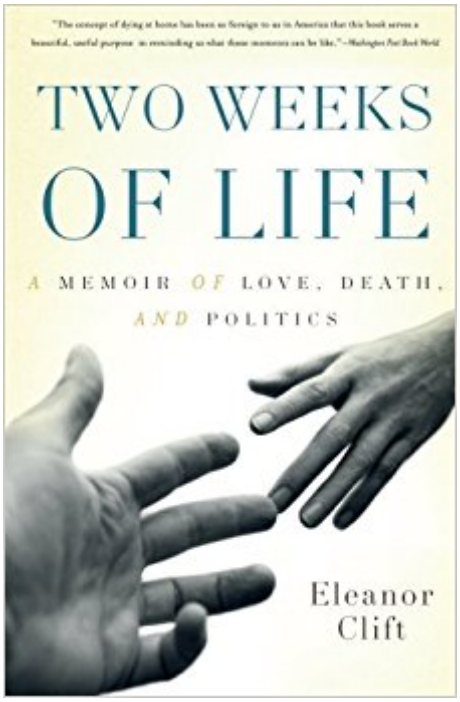
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Two Weeks Of Life: A Memoir Of Love, Death, And Politics



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Synopsis

While Eleanor Clift cared for her husband, journalist Tom Brazaitis, through the last two weeks of his life, the nation watched a very different death play out as Terri Schiavo entered her final days. In the commonalities and contradictions between these events, Clift probes the underlying questions: How should we handle the decisions surrounding a loved one's death? What if that loved one did not—or cannot—speak to us about these issues?

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Customer Reviews

In this elegant, heartrending account of the final choices we make, journalist Clift (Founding Sisters) juxtaposes the death of two people, one close to her and the other a national cause cÃƒÂ©lÃƒÂ¨bre. Clift's husband of 20 years, Tom Brazaitis, also a journalist, was diagnosed with metastatic kidney cancer in 1999, and after undergoing various debilitating treatments, by March 2005 he lay dying in his home hospice. Meanwhile, the fate of Terri Schiavo, a woman in a permanent vegetative state in a Florida hospice, hung in the balance, decided by courts and President Bush himself. Shiavo's husband and parents were battling over the decision to cease feeding her by tube, and their family custody case turned into a crusade led by vociferous fundamentalist Christians. In diary format, Clift recounts the history of Tom's illness and their relationship while weaving in references to the Shiavo case and touching knowledgeably on the history of the hospice movement. The two main narratives work surprisingly well together, the tenderness and pathos of the first serving to illuminate the complex moral issues of the second, and visa versa. The result is a moving portrait. Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of

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"Kirkus Reviews""A powerful mix of opinion, reporting and poignant recollection."John Danforth, former United States Senator from Missouri""Two Weeks of Life" helps us think deeply about about the end of life decisions that the successes of modern medicine have thrust upon us: how and how long to survive under the most dire conditions.""New York Times Book Review""Eleanor Clift's reporting on the Schiavo ordeal is thorough, and her tender description of her husband's exemplary death demonstrates how hospice care can help achieve what she calls a 'more peaceful ushering in of the inevitable.'""Booklist""Clift's situation with her husband is an intensely personal one, and readers will feel for the couple as they learn of his diagnosis and their attempts to find extraordinary treatments to cure the cancer that originated in his kidney and then spread to his brain."Helen Thomas, Hearst Newspapers columnist"Eleanor Clift has written a remarkable book about the disgraceful government intervention in the death of Terri Schiavo and brilliantly melded in the death of newspaper man Tom Brazaitis, her husband. She tells the story that gripped the nation and made it deal with the profound questions of life and death. It's a great book."Morton M. Kondracke, author of "Saving Milly: Love, Politics and Parkinson's Disease""As someone who has cared for a dying spouse, I found Eleanor Clift's story of her last days with her beloved Tom moving and enriching--and her account of poor Terri Schiavo's demise, perfectly horrifying. This book will enlighten all who read it--hopefully including our national leaders--about the difference between 'good death' and 'bad death.'"

If you love the way Eleanor Clift stands up to the conservatives on the MacLaughlin Group, you'll enjoy and sympathize with her touching memoir.She details the difficult but compassionate decision many people have to make.

I found Eleanor's book to be a very emotional and poignant story. She points out the struggles we have as a society and individually of dealing with end-of-life issues and appropriate care for the patient.

Eleanor Clift, known to many Americans by her presence and prescient offerings on "The McLaughlin Group", has written a dynamic book paralleling the lives and deaths of two people in the early spring of 2005...her husband, Tom Brazaitis, and Terri Schiavo, whose lingering life and death

were watched by millions. In "Two Weeks of Life", Clift recounts the final days of both individuals...one who died a relatively private death...the other whose family endured a demise which was both horrifying and unnecessarily public.Clift charts broad waters as she seeks and succeeds to give an overview of the times and how her own emotions were caught up with Tom. She tells of how hospice was looked upon in such craven ways as measured by the religious right's stepping over almost every conceivable boundary to "save Terri". Her accounts of Mary Labyak and the endurance tests she had to face as administrative head of Florida Suncoast hospice are chilling. Clift begins with an assertion that "this is not a political book, or at least it shouldn't have been", but knowing enough about the author one can only imagine it doesn't take her long to roll up her sleeves and opine...and she does so with gusto. On the Schiavo side we revisit the Congressional "call to action" with Governor Jeb Bush and President George Bush lamely trying to intervene...certainly a stain on the reputations of the entire Republican leadership. But she notes the Democrats were almost universally nowhere to be found, ending up with the whole operation as a bungled mess, at least politically. But Clift really shines as she relates her visits to Art Buchwald in hospice and the support she received from friends and colleagues on the McLaughlin program. Some of the funniest moments of the book occur while she is describing the back and forth food fight nature of the show. As the lone liberal and the only female, Clift's welcome voice is usually heard well above the din of the other guests."Two Weeks of Life" ends poignantly with columns written by Tom as he proceeds through his years of treatment. Providing some good medical information about his cancer, balanced by Tom's own wit, Clift gives a bittersweet feel to a man I'm sure we all would like to have known. I'm only sorry there was not a photograph or two of Tom included in the book so that the reader could have a face to put to his writings. I highly recommend this book and commend Eleanor Clift for showing the differences in how death can be experienced in both public and private settings.

I wanted very much to like this book, and I did--but only somewhat.The Terri Schiavo material began to seem like filler to me and made me lose interest in the rest of the book. I followed the Schiavo case rather closely when it was in the news, and I didn't buy this book expecting more re-hash of it--but that's what I got.

couldn't get into it.

You probably know Eleanor Clift, or at least know of her. On Sundays, she's the one being yelled at

on The McLaughlin Group. Anyone who's seen that show knows she is a tough professional who stands her ground. This book proves it. Even in the hardest of times, Clift is a journalist to the core. She declares in the early pages that this is a love story, and indeed it is, as she records the love she shared with her husband, Tom Brazaitis, as together they faced his spreading cancer and eventual death. But it is more than a memoir.At the same time she is recording in precise and difficult detail the last two weeks of Tom's life lived peacefully in the living room of their home with the help of hospice, she tells of another story of life and death taking place in Florida--that of Terri Schiavo. Terri Schiavo's story dominated the news as her husband and parents debated the decision of continuing to sustain Terri's life. The governor and courts of Florida became involved, and then the dispute was taken to congress and the president. While Clift was caring for Tom every night, she was involved as a journalist and commentator covering the Schiavo controversy. Her husband, also a journalist, had insisted early on that Clift continue her professional commitments. She did.Now she has taken these two simultaneous events and combined them into an account that is both an intense personal memoir and a clear analysis of the hard decisions that face families when a loved one's life is ending. She gives her story clearly while she weaves in the Schiavo story in even-handed reporting. "I'm a journalist by training and instinct. That reporting is the vehicle for my journey to make sense of the physical, ethical and moral issues legitimately raised by both sides in the debate," Clift explains in the preface to the book.This is a difficult topic, but one that most of us will have to face at some point. While the book is serious and straightforward, it is not difficult to read. In fact, it is a pleasure both to share the personal story and to benefit from Clift's clear writing. The inclusion at book's end of several columns written for the Cleveland Plain Dealer by Brazaitis across the course of his struggle makes the story even more tender and personal.by Patricia Nordyke Pandofor Story Circle Book Reviewsreviewing books by, for, and about women

I read excerpts of Eleanor Clift's "Two Weeks of Like" in Newsweek, where she's been a contributor for a number of years. Those selected well-written passages about a very sensitive event - the death from kidney cancer of her husband, Cleveland Plains Dealer Washington correspondent, Tom Brazaitis - made me seek out her book in hardcover. The work as a whole stands up to the strength of the Newsweek excerpts. The operative word in Clift's work is "juxtaposition" - the dignity with which Brazaitis spends his final days vs. how Terry Schiavo spends hers. Clift never comes out and editorializes about Schiavo's treatment, but by contrasting that experience vs. her huband's, she makes her point passively but no less passionately.At the very least, anyone reading this book will surely react by wanting to have living wills and medical powers of attorney in proper legal order.

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