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Jeanette Michelle's *Taking Care of Henry* is the author's determination to record the downward health spiral experienced by her father, Henry, following his stroke and ultimate diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease and the steadfast love, care and determination exhibited by his wife Ruth as she continues by his side.

On the opening pages of this work writer Michelle tells the reader she actually began this work nearly a decade ago with the notion that writing about her father's unfortunate illness might help her cope with the awfulness of the situation over which she had no control. After a time Michelle stopped writing on the manuscript, however she did keep a journal.

Taking Care of Henry is an outgrowth of Michelle's journal. It is unedited, and chronicles the thoughts, hopes, despair, conversations with family, and intention for the book itself. Michelle presents *Taking Care of Henry* to help inform others regarding realities facing caregivers and the reaction of other family members.

Saturday, August 14, 1993 came the call no one wants to receive. Henry had had a stroke, was miles away in Greenwood, Mississippi, entailing a worry filled trip from Chicago to Greenwood and coming together as a family.

Ruth, an understanding woman, realized from the outset that the man with whom she had lived, borne children and cared for was gone, and gone forever, however the man left in his body was worth caring for.

Michelle takes the reader along on the journey as Henry slips into Alzheimer's disease, relates the various stages of the condition and what to expect as the caregiver, family of an Alzheimer's patient as she and her family faced the sad

realities with tears, hope, more tears, acceptance of the disease, nursing home care as it became necessary and unswerving focus on reality.

Filled with liberal apprehension, relief, tumult and concern all tempered with familial love and spousal affection *Taking Care of Henry* is the work of a caring daughter ringing with the poignancy of one who faces her father's slow drift into death, realizing with sadness that her Daddy no longer remembers who she is, and facing that her mother in her hurt began to behave in manner she had not done before, along with the realization that siblings often do not shoulder any share, much less a reasonable share of the worry, or other commitment that comes with a disabled parent, and a parent who has become a caregiver.

Because this is the unedited journal of a woman trying to piece her thoughts and life together following great family tragedy there are some grammar, and other gaffs which I do not find detract at all from the reading or the message the writer wants to convey. Having lost my own father to what in those days was called, OBS, Organic Brain Syndrome, which presented so many of the symptoms Michelle lists along with facing the fact that our Daddy no longer knew US, was an especially difficult situation for my Mom and my sisters. Mom, as Writer Michelle's mother was adamant she did not want Daddy in nursing care, on the other hand, Daddy's care, as Michelle's family discovered with their father at last was such that trained nursing care was necessary. It is a hard decision to face at best.

That having been said; *Taking Care of Henry* presents a good reference work needed today. I can see this book being used during grief and other counseling sessions as an aid to encourage family and spouse of those suffering from irreparable, debilitating situation whether Alzheimer's disease or other similar situation.

Taking Care of Henry is sure to capture the interest of readers facing the realities of tragedy of life be they black or not.

Happy to recommend Jeanette Michelle's *Taking Care of Henry*.

NOTE: Michelle's table of contents indicates the reader will be offered Words from Ruth, the writer's brothers Chris, Joseph, Paul, Henry himself following his nursing home placement, and words from Michelle.

Note: When author Jeanette Michelle first approached me regarding reviewing her writing; she asked whether I would mind reviewing books written from a black perspective. I assured writer Michelle, that despite the fact that I am not black I foresaw no problem. And, I'm pleased to say, that *Taking Care of*

Henry has proven to be a worthwhile and stirring read penned by a black female writer using a black voice, presented from a black viewpoint.

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Reviewed by Molly's Reviews
molly martin

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