

My Life in the VA: Lessons in Leadership

Frederick Malphurs

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“At age fifty-nine, with thirty-seven years of service, there are always goals not completed, challenges where I could have contributed to the solution...But the twinges of regret and loss have been few and far between,” Frederick Malphurs writes. “Based on advice I received from other retirees, I decided to retire but not to work for a year. I would try my hand at writing.”

With his first book, Malphurs delivers a fascinating memoir about his years of service to the United States Government's Department of Veteran Affairs. It was here that he witnessed the benefits and shortcomings of the American healthcare system under several different administrations. His experiences are presented in this compelling read that offers readers an insider's look at Veteran's Affairs.

Malphurs begins by relating his earliest childhood experiences that would eventually shape his professional career and personal set of beliefs. His father was an alcoholic, and Malphurs essentially raised himself by learning lessons the hard way. After graduating from the University of Florida in 1967, Malphurs began his career in the VA. It is clear that he was led to this line of work out of a need to care for others, the way he was not cared for himself.

The book moves swiftly but thoroughly through Malphurs' career, breaking down each section of his advancement into chapters and subchapters. The result is a condensed read, but one that pays off in the end. The book would have benefited from a strong edit to improve sentence structure and grammar, but it is an informative, enjoyable read that will keep the audience involved. Malphurs is never afraid to voice his opinion on any given subject—most notably the need for healthcare reform, which begins a healthy debate between himself and his reader.

“The executive branch and Congress needs to quit ignoring serious construction deficiencies in the VA. VA health care facilities need to have their real needs met,” Malphurs writes in an example of the no-nonsense comments offered in his memoir. These quips are directed at politicians on Capitol Hill, but also to the hearts and minds of his audience. Malphurs is the voice of an unheard majority, one that went to war for its country again and again, but one that has yet to be fully compensated for such heroism. This is an important book that will hopefully play a small role in influencing forthcoming change in the United States' healthcare system.

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