



The Wrinkly Ranch: Unbelievably Funny, Shocking and Poignant Anecdotes of Life and Work in Long-Term Care

Tristan Squire-Smith

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The Wrinkly Ranch is the shocking memoir of a long-term care worker whose stories are used to forward suggestions for system improvement.

Tristan Squire-Smith's unvarnished memoir *The Wrinkly Ranch* gathers his unpredictable daily experiences with working in long-term care facilities.

Sans embellishments, this book works to provide clear images of its scenarios, all of which take place in long-term care facilities. Squire-Smith recalls that residents' family members are prone to calling the facilities' staff members with unrealistic instructions, such as to serve wine to their loved ones at a specific time, or to fluff a person's pillows. Statements from such people are often repeated verbatim.

But the book also covers logistics, like the roles of different departments within a facility, and how each staff member contributes to a facility's smooth running. The daily activities that staff members carry out, and the common interactions that they have with residents, are detailed in involving terms. Squire-Smith writes with care about some health issues that elderly people face, recommending practical ways for family members to help their relatives. Significant issues regarding long-term care that need to be addressed are also named.

Each chapter is topical and brief. There are discussions of how long-term care facilities prevent and control outbreaks when they arise; about how body parts change as people age; and expressing the belief that every resident matters. In the process, Squire-Smith also captures the close bonds that develop between residents and staff members, recalling how one resident expressed trust in him, discussing their absent family members just moments before passing on.

Beyond being informative, the book is also amusing. There are stories about residents exchanging dentures by mistake and smiling with ill-fitting teeth; others joke about death, making lists of what they won't miss when they're gone. Some residents give the staff members funny nicknames, too, or call each other "loony" in the midst of dementia. Such moments are a source of balance, particularly paired with the grave discussions that occur elsewhere (for example, Squire-Smith remembers instances of verbal and physical assault, and of xenophobia, directed against staff members).

From his experiences, Squire-Smith mines tips for those with loved ones in long-term care, or who may end up in long-term care facilities themselves. The book advises being prepared for all eventualities, as well as writing and updating one's will. Family members are urged to make funeral arrangements beforehand, and to be proactive in assessing their elderly family member's well-being. A sense that it is important to learn the criteria of admission in advance is imparted.

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EDITH WAIRIMU (June 20, 2022)

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