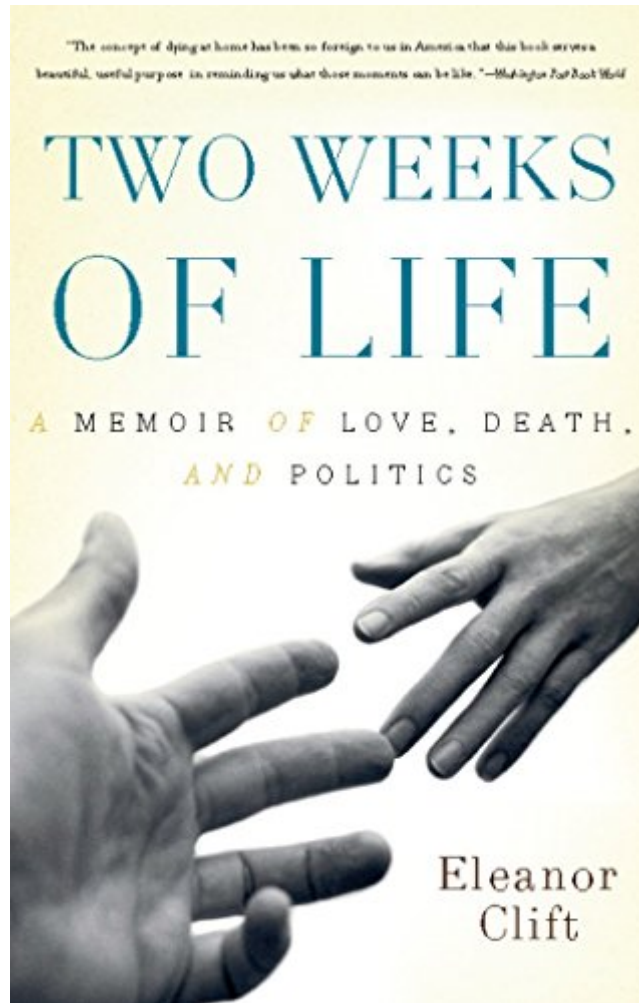


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Two Weeks Of Life: A Memoir Of Love, Death, And Politics



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

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.

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.

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