

Reviews of A Survival Guide to Later Life

**by Marion Shoard,
(published by Constable and Robinson, 2004,
640 pages, £9.99, ISBN 1-84119-372-0)**

**'Grey Matter': review by David Cox,
published in the New Statesman, 16 April, 2004**

We know little of the horrors confronting the elderly, because we prefer not to. The unwelcome fact that we must one day join them has caused us to shut the grim realities of their existence from our minds. From time to time, news bulletins recount some spectacular instance of abuse out there on the granny farms, that ever-expanding Gulag from which no traveller returns. Yet such dispiriting tales invariably slip swiftly from the headlines.

Soon, however, this may change. Later life is about to grip the unwilling attention of the most assertive generation in history -- the baby-boomers. Still clutching their Rolling Stones vinyl's, the spoilt children of the last mid-century find themselves on the brink of an experience which threatens to make nonsense of all they hold dear. Are they going to go gently into that netherworld of meals-on-wheels, hearing aids and zimmer frames, like their uncomplaining predecessors, to exit oh so finally into the banal embrace of the council crem? Are they hell.

The much-touted grey revolution is now upon us, with the result that issues hitherto deemed too boring to contemplate, such as pensions, are forcing their way up the news agenda. This revolution is being driven, like previous baby-boomer indulgences, by sheer muscle-power. At the next general election, for the first time, a majority of voters will be either retired or within five years of retirement. As the boomers' consumer consciousness, rights fixation and honest-to-goodness selfishness collide with the dismally unreconstructed world of eldercare, expect an explosion.

Any self-respecting revolution requires a manifesto. Marion Shoard has provided a text that ought to mobilise even the most laid-back of the children of Marx, Coca-Cola and collagen. This all-encompassing manual has little in common with the anaemic fact-sheets hanging limply from the noticeboard of your doctor's surgery. The vast but little-known world of care homes, social services, voluntary organisations and rip-off commercial eldercare operations is subjected to the relentless glare we take for granted elsewhere.

It comes as a shock to discover the fate to which we have been blithely consigning our elders. We might not expect life to be all fun for care home residents, but surely they shouldn't be routinely murdered once they become too much of a bother. If someone finds it difficult to grip a cup, "care staff" can apparently hasten their passage to the next life by the simple expedient of keeping that cup just slightly out of their reach. Those who escape slaughter, it emerges, are still likely to suffer endless indignities.

They may be "toileted" at two-hour intervals throughout the night, lest they soil the sheets, or their weekly bath may be timed for 4am.

Even before older people lose their liberty, plentiful affronts await them. Hospitals inscribe "do not resuscitate" on their medical records when they pop in for minor treatment. Public authorities urge single parents and asylum seekers to claim benefits, but go out of their way to conceal their obligations to the elderly. Local councils cheerfully close public lavatories essential to the mobility of those with ageing bladders.

Against the vast array of such iniquities, this book assembles the paraphernalia of consumer action, political protest and the culture of complaint now so familiar in other spheres. Official weak-spots are identified, routine scams and dodges by which the elderly are cheated of their entitlements are held up to view. Practical guidance is infused with messianic zeal. Afflictions like dementia, incontinence and macular degeneration, it is implied, merit the kind of attention currently given to illnesses such as breast cancer or Aids.

As those who hoped to die before they grew old start to rage against the dying of the light, this book offers to transmute their pain into action. Its potential impact can hardly be overstated. Dr Spock's 50-million-selling Baby and Child Care managed to turn parenthood into a religion. Shoard's Survival Guide may mark the beginning of the end of the long hegemony of hitherto gilded youth.

***'The challenges of later life' by Liz Day, carer and lecturer,
published in Community Practitioner, May 2004***

When I saw the title, I wasn't immediately drawn towards the book. I have read such 'guides' before and found them patronising. I was therefore not only surprised but also really impressed by the quality of the writing and the breadth and depth of the content.

There are eight main parts to the book: physical, social, emotional and spiritual needs and changes; the care machine; staying independent; care homes – costs and choices; hospitals; money; representation and carers.

Each section is thoroughly researched, well referenced and includes examples of very recent developments in the field. There are also 30 pages of useful addresses and websites so readers can follow up the issues raised.

In writing clearly and using case studies, the author demonstrates how older people and carers can challenge taken-for-granted impressions and assumptions. Self-advocacy is very important in old age as ageism and patronising attitudes continue to exist.

This text would be an extremely useful read for hospital-based colleagues, students of community nursing courses as well as a resource for practice and community nurses. It is also a mine of information for older people and carers.

Review by Lotte Newman published in *The British Journal of General Practice*, July 2004

The past is a foreign country, but so is old age, and as you enter it you feel you are treading unknown territory, leaving your own land behind. You've never been here before.¹

This quotation sets the theme for this helpful and practical book. The author of *A Survival Guide to Later Life* deals sensitively with issues such as moving house, retirement housing and the selection of a care home. She includes, in the latter, a guide to the quality of tea-bags and coffee used. Apparently, if both are cheap, then the presumption is that the management of the home may also scrimp on lighting, heating and 'second helpings'.

The chapter 'Adapting Surroundings' details changes that can be made to major rooms and gardens. There is also an excellent list of gadgets and aids, including stair lifts, alarms and walking aids, and clever ways of funding them. Bugbears such as incontinence are described, including suggestions of useful clothing and equipment like 'kylie sheets'.

There is a detailed section on professional helpers, which states that:

The GP will decide, prescribe and control your access to the rest of what the health service can offer. Life or death, blindness or vision, immobility or freedom of movement, all these and much more are theirs to determine.

It also emphasises practical issues such as 'flu jabs', annual health checks and regular reviews of medication. Important issues such as age-related macular degeneration, dementia, depression and employment of staff are also examined.

Other helpful chapters discuss money, state, housing and council tax benefits, and a further chapter considers legal and financial representation, which also covers vital issues including bank authorisation, power of attorney, receivership and appointeeship. An appendix deals with complaints and lists useful contacts.

Each chapter is well referenced. Shoard concludes that many elderly people are happy in spite of some of the restrictions of old age. Moreover, she emphasises that it is only at this time that many break through the barriers that have prevented them from really knowing their younger relatives and descendants.

I recommend it.

Reference

1. *Morris, J Trieste and the meaning of nowhere*, London: Faber and Faber, 2001

**'Overcoming ageist ministry' -
review of *A Survival Guide to Later Life* by Dr James Woodward,
published in *The Church of England Newspaper*, 6 August, 2004**

Is the Church of England really bothered about older people? Do we understand their needs? Can our churches play a part in enabling older people to embrace diminishment positively and make a spiritual contribution to ministry and mission?

Archbishop Carey in an interview to the Reader's Digest before his appointment to Canterbury told his readers that the church today seemed rather like a very old grandmother who sat by the chimney breast muttering to herself, ignored by the rest of the family and out of touch with its culture. He hoped that the church would become progressively younger as it was re-evangelised by the gospel. This understandable desire for renewal and necessary emphasis on younger people has, at every level of church life, had the effect of marginalising and alienating older people. Perhaps our grandmothers are the church's natural spiritual constituency? Perhaps the church might take a lead in supporting and affirming this growing group in society?

This book deserves to find its way into our reading groups and conversations about pastoral care and mission. It is a triumph of the mastery of a vast quantity of complex information. It has a passion and an energy which emerged out of the writer's own experience of looking for help from others following her own mother's need for care.

Do not imagine that this is in any way a tedious self-help book. It is well organised, well written with a powerful grasp of the questions, complexities and feelings around old age. I shall be recommending it to all kinds of people who simply need to think differently about older people and their own processes of ageing.

Organised into eight parts with 21 chapters, the book deals with every aspect of later life. Part one describes some of the problems of mind and body for older people. The essentials of the machinery of support provided for older people are set out in Part two: The Care Machine. The next section of the book (Parts three, four and five) is organised chronologically, following the developing stages of ageing. Part three suggests ways in which the older person can live independently and happily at home. Part four explains how a care home might be chosen and how to prepare for entry and to make sure that life inside it is as enjoyable as possible. Part five tackles the contentious topics of ageist discrimination and withholding life-sustaining treatment. Part six deals with some of the problematic financial aspects of provision and benefits. Part seven (Representation) steers the reader through the world of powers of attorney. Part eight deals with the unrecognised and undervalued issue of carers. There is also a very useful and comprehensive section called Useful Contacts.

My only criticism is that, ironically, the book is not easy to read (typeface) or be handled (size and shape of book) by older people. It is difficult to know how this might have been remedied.

We should look at the ways in which our churches marginalise, disempower and devalue older people, their lives and experiences.

**Review by Cynthia Heymanson
published in Community Care, 29 July – 4 August 2004**

Although Marion Shoard has written her book for families and friends of older people or older people seeking to prepare for their very old age, it definitely has uses for social and health care workers.

This book can be recommended to families after professionals have explained care systems and pathways, when follow-up information and reference materials are requested.

The chapters on care homes explain the complexities honestly and thoroughly - both for finding a home and how to get the best out of one; ideal for self-funders. Staff may be less able to provide users and carers with detail on rights (for example eligibility for NHS Continuing Care and complaints) beyond the standard leaflets provided, so the sections on these can lessen potential conflict of interests and save time. Also by endorsing the value of carers' assessments, take-up might be increased. There are also 25 pages of useful contacts.

Cynthia Heymanson is a dementia resource worker.

**Review published in Nursing Older People
Vol 16 No 2, April 2004**

The author is a lay person, writing from experience of caring for her mother as her health declined. Along the way she learned a great deal and this book sets out to share that knowledge. There is no question that this is an ambitious project and what it may lack in terms of detail in some respects, it makes up for in other ways.

While nurses may find the chapters on 'the ageing body' and 'changing needs' lacking in detail, there is so much here that will add to their understanding of the complex world outside health care. A crisp, clear writing style, augmented by the use of expert advisers drawn from different professional backgrounds, ensures that the book explores issues that may not always receive enough attention. So, readers are reminded to think about matters as diverse as religious faith and the beneficial effects of animals.

The very substantial section on care homes, which covers the process to be used for finding one, meeting the cost and adapting to life in a home, is very practical and right up to date, taking account of the recent changes to inspection.

Specialist and non-specialist nurses will find many items of value within these pages, and it would make a good and accessible resource to have around to assist patients' partners or children as they enter the confusing web of public, private and voluntary resources available to support their loved one after a period of hospitalisation.

Les Bright MSc, CQCYW

**'Great Guide' from Living for Retirement,
1 April 2004**

This invaluable book by award-winning writer and anti-ageism campaigner Marion Shoard is packed with great advice on how to make life easier as you grow older. Ann Widdecombe, MP, described A Survival Guide to Later Life as "a godsend" and broadcaster Jon Snow as "excellent".

**'Getting older' - review
published in the Methodist Recorder 12 August 2004**

Along with the twin sureties of death and taxes comes a third: none of us gets any younger and bureaucracy seems to increase at the same rate as the increased life expectancy which we begin to take for granted. Methodist Marion Shoard, drawing on her own experience as carer for her mother - who suffered from osteoarthritis, fading sight and Alzheimer's disease - has written what might be considered the definitive manual on our later years, A Survival Guide to Later Life, subtitled "How to stay healthy, happy, mobile and in control" (Constable and Robinson Ltd, £9.99). This excellent publication could also be entitled "Inquire within on everything", so comprehensive is its range in providing answers and advice on topics the reader may not yet have identified as problems likely to need solution. The eight sections include those on Staying Independent, Care Homes, Money and Carers among others and the 640-plus pages include 60 devoted to references, contacts and an index. A practical, invaluable reference book to keep at hand.

Review
published in Stroke News, Autumn 2004

Marion Shoard's mother developed Alzheimer's disease, on top of osteo-arthritis and age-related macular degeneration. While in hospital, she had a stroke and Ms Shoard found herself fighting hospital discharge. Finding no adequate guidance to help her, she has written the book she would have liked to consult. All older people as well as everybody who has had a stroke, old or young, as well as their carers, should find it invaluable. It is also useful to people involved professionally in the eldercare world.

Topics covered in the book's 604 pages include help in the home, gadgets and aids, making the most of your GP, making the most of your faith group, maintaining and adapting the home, sheltered housing, mobility, diet, incontinence, exercise, the state care machine, the voluntary world, representation (in the medical as well as the legal and financial spheres) state benefits, private financial matters, carers, hospitals (including hospital discharge and NHS Continuing Care), day centres, the special problems of people with dementia and hearing difficulties, befriending schemes, falls and a large section on care homes (covering short-term as well as long-term stays).

The section on hospitals alerts readers to the problems which can accompany a hospital stay, such as the development of pressure sores and inappropriate catheterisation, and uses stroke as an example of what to expect by way of acute care, general nursing support and rehabilitation measures. The author discussed this section with the stroke specialist Dr David Cohen, whom she contacted after hearing him address a Stroke Association conference.

As well as providing practical guidance, the book explains the changes to the body which inevitably occur with ageing together with the changing physical, psychological and spiritual needs of elderly people. It ends with 30 pages of addresses of useful organisations, covering the whole of the UK.

A Survival Guide to Later Life by Marion Shoard is published by Constable and Robinson, price £9.99, and is available from bookshops. The author is available to give talks. Her address is P O Box 403, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 1SA. Further details of her activities can be found on her website – www.marionshoard.co.uk.

'The way through the maze' published in Home and Country: The National Voice of the Women's Institutes, 1 August, 2004

In the mid-1990s, the award winning investigative writer Marion Shoard found herself in the maze of elder care when her mother became frail and developed Alzheimer's disease. Marion draws on her personal experience in a comprehensive new guide which explains the many different ways in which older people can help themselves and how friends and family can also make their lives easier. A Survival Guide to Later Life puts the workings of the care world in the spotlight and exposes the deficiencies of the system. Containing interviews with users and people working at every level of later-life care, this 600-page guide is packed with useful information and tips. These include: how older people can live in their own homes for as long as possible; what social services departments and the NHS must provide; and how to choose a care home.

Review by The Reverend Roy Porter, published in Christianity and Renewal, November 2004

I found this book depressing, and did not enjoy reading it. But don't get me wrong: it is a good book.

It was depressing because it reminded me, as an able-bodied, L-plated retiree, that the present 'golden age' will not last for ever, and that I need to be thinking of a more uncertain future, in which such things as physical illness, dementia, lack of mobility, poor hearing, etc may afflict me.

It did not make enjoyable reading because it is primarily a reference book; but what a mine of information it contains. How did anyone ever dare to face old-age without such a book at hand? It is an exhaustive work, though there is some repetition. This should help older people, their carers and those pastoring them.

Selling point: covers more than you could ever wish it to - and targets a subject rarely written about

**Review by Maggie Biggs
published in Osteoporosis News, Autumn 2004**

When Marion Shoard's mother was no longer able to look after herself she tried to find help but there seemed no-one to show her the ropes and guide her through the vast and complex 'system' that is the health and social services, and she encountered many difficulties and frustrations. This book will be invaluable to anyone in this position.

The first sections cover the difference between the bodies of older and younger people, providing a useful framework to help understand the problems of body, mind and spirit.

The essentials of the machinery of support for older people by government and non-governmental organisations are set out in Part Two: The Care Machine. This chapter covers topics such as primary care, professionals and district general hospitals and includes a useful paragraph on hospital personnel including the hierarchy of hospital physicians.

Parts Three, Four and Five follow the developing stages of ageing with Part Three suggesting ways in which people can continue to live independently at home. However, one in 20 people over the age of 65 live in a care home and Part Four tells the reader not only how to choose a home (the quality of the tea bags is a good indicator!) but how to prepare for and make a life in a home as enjoyable as possible. Part Five tackles the contentious topics of ageist discrimination and withholding life-sustaining treatment. Other issues like infection control and continence care are also explored. There are separate sections on strokes and long-stay NHS care.

Those who have made provision for their old age may find unexpected non-means-tested benefits available to them while some of those of modest resources may be better off than they imagine and all is revealed in Part 6: Money. However much money you have you need to make sure your affairs are dealt with as you would wish and Part Seven: Representation steers the reader through the world of powers of attorney and makes suggestions about finding proxies in the medical and social care worlds too.

Partners, close relatives or friends who support people living in their own homes now have statutory rights and Part Eight: Carers describes what these little-known rights are. It may also help with the decision about whether to become a carer.

Although this book is directed primarily at older people it will be useful to families, friends and anyone working in homes and hospitals. It may also be a useful resource for National Osteoporosis Society support groups.

Review by Arline Usden published in The Lady, 21 December 2004

A Survival Guide to Later Life by Marion Shoard is a good reference book that explains the different ways in which older people can help themselves and how their relatives and friends can make life easier for them.

Marion Shoard:

Writer | Broadcaster | Lecturer
www.marionshoard.co.uk

It brings you up to date with the care system - and its deficiencies - and includes advice on staying independent, keeping afloat financially, choosing retirement and care homes and tips on how to stay healthy. It is a comprehensive guide to help empower elderly people and their families.

Review by Helen Buri, Independent Occupational Therapist from Helensburgh, published in the British Journal of Occupational Therapy, October 2004

This helpful paperback guide covers a multitude of aspects associated with growing older, including the ageing process, demographic and social changes, staying independent, receiving hospital care and choosing where to live. What makes it different from the usual texts about ageing is that it is written with the older person and his or her relatives in mind.

Written in an immensely practical style, the author 'hand-holds' the reader through the maze of statutory and voluntary services, financial and legal information, exploding myths and challenging assumptions about becoming older on the way. The author manages to comment on an incredibly broad spectrum of issues. At one end we learn about the influence of recent legislation and standards, including the National Service Framework for Older People; at the other extreme, what to look for in a care home, down to advice about checking the quality of tea bags used.

This book will empower older people because it encourages readers to question assumptions about ageing. It provides older people and their relatives with detailed information to help them find a pathway through the complex organisations and systems that they need to deal with in ensuring they can stay in control of their lives.

It is a book to 'dip into' rather than read from cover to cover. It also contains a list of useful contacts including many websites. The print and font size does not lend itself easily to those with poor vision. It may be most useful for people of pre-retirement age who are preparing for later life in order that they can make informed choices about the future, although relatives of less able older people will also find it invaluable. It is certainly a book that every occupational therapist working with older people should have access to as a quick reference guide.

**Review by Ron and Barbara Harvey
published in *The Parkinson*, Autumn 2004**

There is a saying that 'old age does not come alone'. It can bring happiness, fulfilling dreams of your retirement, but it can also bring many problems. So what can we do to make the later stages of life as trouble-free as possible? Knowing where to find good advice is difficult.

We believe that Marion Shoard's book is the answer as it explains all the different ways in which people in later life can help themselves and how their relatives and friends can make life easier for them. Its guidance and suggestions, offering many little-known tips, include:

- Ways to stay healthy and happy
- How to stay independent
- Gadgets that can beat disability
- Engaging with your council and the NHS
- Keeping afloat financially
- Choosing retirement and care homes
- Our changing needs
- The type and vital role of carers

The author, who goes into great detail on how to use this book, has achieved an excellent and comprehensive scope and it is radiating in good sense. It is almost impossible to imagine how she has managed to so successfully encompass the diverse issues and problems confronting people in later life, and those who care for them.

We feel that this book used as a reference book, and in conjunction with the Society's information sheets, would be an asset to any family bookshelf and Branch or Support Group library.

**Review by Caroline Palmer
published in Careline (the magazine of Jewish Care), Winter 2005**

As you read *A Survival Guide to Later Life*, it becomes increasingly puzzling as to why there has not been a book on this subject before. Its sub-title is "How to stay healthy, happy, mobile and in control" and it is those last two words that are the key to the book's aim - to offer information, guidance and good sense on most of the issues facing the older age group.

As the book's author, Marion Shoard, explains in her introduction: "If lots of us are going to live to be old, and many very old, how should we treat those later years? We plan our children's lives and our working lives, yet few plan for old age in a systematic way, still less for old age with disability.

There is something about preparing for old age which ranks it alongside personal finance reorganisation or testicular examination: we prefer to place it on the back burner, or even better, forget all about it."

Marion Shoard is on a one-woman crusade to change all that in a book which, although aimed primarily at older people themselves, should be equally useful to their close relatives, partners and friends.

A look through the contents pages gives you an immediate feel for the sheer scope of the book, which begins with the changing needs of the ageing body, goes on to explain how to navigate the "care machine" in both the voluntary and state sectors, talks about gadgets and aids to keep you independent, through to what benefits you may be entitled to and how to grant enduring power of attorney.

As medical writer Dr James Le Fanu says in the book's foreword: "The measure of the significance of her book is that it is difficult to imagine how people ever managed to cope before she wrote it."

A Survival Guide to Later Life by Marion Shoard is published by Robinson at £9.99.

**Review by Barbara Sutcliffe
published in *Physiotherapy*, December 2004**

As the title makes clear, this is a book for the general reader rather than the specialist. It is of great interest to elderly people who wish to be well informed about the many options that are available to them as well as their statutory rights. It is also valuable for carers, relatives and friends of an elderly person who may be involved in their welfare.

The wide and often exciting scope of life after 60 years of age (in what is misleadingly called 'retirement') is sympathetically considered from a range of activities to questions of future health, social and accommodation needs.

The book includes a list of references and contacts which provide a useful resource, and staff working in what the author calls 'eldercare' may find the comprehensive coverage and scope helpful. The text is clearly written and includes highlighted summaries to emphasize key points in many of the chapters.

The information is up to date but will benefit from regular updates to address changes in future legislation. The assertion that 'Social work has only recently become a profession which, as a condition of entry, qualifications including specific examinations and practical work from approved training courses are required' is questionable. The first qualification courses were held early in the last century and psychiatric social workers have had a specific qualification since the 1930s. The author's view that the closure of long-stay hospital wards was to be regretted is also contentious. The conditions that prevailed in many of these establishments meant that their closure should be welcomed; what is regrettable is the lack of sufficient alternatives.

This book would be a useful reference to have in any Physiotherapy Department's library and one that therapists could recommend to their more mature patients.

**Review by Margaret Surrey, social work manager, published in
Professional Social Work, January 2005**

Marion Shoard developed an interest in older people after her elderly mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in the 1990s. She went on to produce this book for both older people and carers to "make the later stages of life as trouble free and fulfilling as possible".

This is a well-researched and well-presented book covering all aspects of care of older people. It includes 25 pages of contacts in the British Isles, including Ireland. I especially like the way the book is set out, with eight sections covering a diversity of subjects including Growing Older, Mobility, Researching and Choosing a Care Home, Benefits, and the Role of Carers. Each section is divided into very readable sub-sections, with boxes providing a bullet point précis.

The MP Ann Widdecombe comments: This book will be a godsend to many a family". I would add: "many a professional too". Whilst not a daily read - do not be put off by its thickness - this book can be dipped into time and again and will be useful when seeking clarification on a topic. It will be an asset to the life of a busy professional, and is well worth buying.

**Review by Madeleine Armstrong
published in *The Journal of Dementia Care*, November/December 2004**

Nearing retirement age myself, I read the introduction to this book with growing dismay. The Third Age seemed to be portrayed in very negative terms, with a great deal about what is likely to go wrong with us all. There was no mention of the very large numbers of older people who continue to have active enjoyable lives. Fortunately after reading this, I went on holiday and met an amazing 77 year-old, who did tap-dancing, Latin line dancing, sang, went to yoga and swimming and was thoroughly enjoying life.

Of course in my role as an Admiral Nurse, I am very aware that this is not possible for many people. This book is a mine of information, which will help older people to help themselves to have the best quality of life possible, and it explains to friends and relatives the problems that might arise and possible ways of overcoming them.

I did feel that the book could alarm readers in places. Again in the introduction the author states that you are expected to use all of your savings to pay care home bills including money released from the sale of the home, until those savings have dwindled to about £20,000. This is correct, but not when a spouse is still living in the house (in that case the house does not have to be sold). This is frequently not understood by people, and terrifies some, so I do feel that this should have been clearly stated.

There are very helpful chapters on keeping fit, benefits, help available, and choosing a home to name but a few, and this would be a very useful book to have on the bookshelf. I would however caution the reader to check the facts in some cases. For instance, Admiral Nurses were described as being there for people in the later stages of dementia, when in fact we are there to support carers from the time of diagnosis. Other topics which are covered include support available, how to choose a care home, financial advice, and the NHS.

There is a very interesting chapter on carers, but mainly written from the point of view of sons and daughters looking after their parents. The carers that I see mostly are spouses often elderly themselves. There is a lot written about carers' assessments and rights, which is very helpful, but there seems to be lack of understanding about the problems which arise. In a rural area, for example, it is often impossible to find people who wish to be employed as a carer to give personal care.

Having read this 650-page book, I marvel at the amount of facts and information that the author has been able to put together. It is a useful reference book. For relatives suddenly plunged into the world of caring for an older person the book would be invaluable.

**Review by Nicholas Coni, Cambridge,
published in *Age and Ageing*, 2005,
volume 34, Cambridge University Press**

It has long been politically correct to ignore problems and only to acknowledge the existence of challenges. But beware of approaching this book expecting a celebration of the joys of longevity and of the benefits to society of the increasing numbers of older people within it. Perhaps very sensibly, these positive aspects of ageing are given pretty short shrift. If you are a tennis-playing, globe-trotting 70-year-old, you really don't need a book about ageing, and as you have no carers, neither do they. But if you, or a 'significant other', are showing signs of increasing physical or mental frailty, or have social or financial difficulties, then this is just the sort of book you do need. It would be unfair to expect a single volume, even of this length, to offer authoritative guidance on all the myriad difficulties sometimes attendant upon advancing age, but this one is certainly pretty comprehensive, and where it does seem to be a little sketchy, it offers useful pointers to more specialised sources of information.

Review published in *Working with Older People*, volume 9, issue 7, June 2005

A Survival Guide to Later Life has good advice for anyone who needs to know the ins and outs of being cared for or caring for an elderly person in today's society. The book takes a detailed look at old age and its particular issues: physical health, age-specific illnesses, mental fitness, independent living, your place in society and much more.

It is written by Marion Shoard, writer, broadcaster and lecturer, who developed an interest in care for older people when her mother developed Alzheimer's. Marion runs a consultancy in elder care and campaigns against ageism.

A Survival Guide to Later Life is published by Constable and Robinson, price £9.99.

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