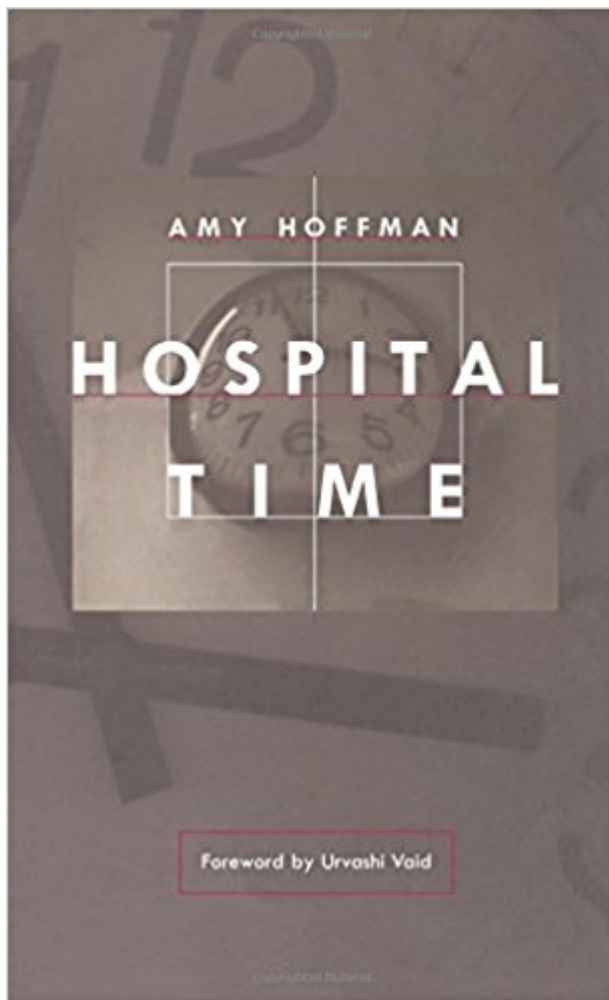


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# Hospital Time



## Synopsis

Hospital Time is a memoir about friendship, family, and caregiving in the age of AIDS. Amy Hoffman, a writer, lesbian activist, and former editor of Gay Community News, chronicles with fury and unflinching honesty her experience serving as primary caretaker for her friend and colleague, Mike Riegle, who died from AIDS-related complications in 1992. Hoffman neither idealizes nor deifies Riegle, whom she portrays as a brilliant man, devoted prison rights activist, and very difficult friend. Hoffman became central to Riegle's caregiving when he asked her to be his health-care proxy, and although she willingly chose to do this, she explores her conflicting feelings about herself in this role and about her involvement with Riegle and his grueling struggle with hospitalization, illness, and, finally, death. She tells of the waves of grief that echoed throughout her life, awakening memories of other losses, entering her dreams and fantasies, and altering her relationships with friends, family, and even total strangers. Hoffman's memoir gives voice to the psychological and emotional havoc AIDS creates for those in the difficult role of caring for the terminally ill and it gives recognition to the role that lesbians continue to play in the AIDS emergency. A foreword by Urvashi Vaid, former executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, offers a meditation on the politics of AIDS and the role of family in the lives of lesbians and gay men.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In Hospital Time, Boston-based writer Hoffman offers a sober examination of the caregiving role the gay and lesbian community has taken upon itself in response to the AIDS crisis. A lesbian caring for

a dying gay friend, Hoffman describes the all too common situation of the gay or lesbian family replacing the biological family at the sick man's deathbed. Her memoir, which reads much like a novel, is built around the illness and death in 1992 of her difficult, brilliant friend, Mike Riegle. And though Hoffman alludes to her anger at Mike, she is unflagging in her commitment, including acting as his health-care proxy. She both understands and resents his idiosyncrasies about food, privacy, even sex, and she captures all the vacillating emotions that accompany caring for a dying loved one. She ultimately concludes, "As angry as I got at him, as frustrated and upset, it didn't occur to me to stop, and he knew it wouldn't, and gave me his love and trust." *Hospital Time* is an honest portrait of the complex emotions that come with caring for the terminally ill. Copyright 1997 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Behind every AIDS statistic we hear on television or read in the newspaper are the uncounted?the friends, co-workers, and family whose lives are irrevocably altered. Hoffman, a writer living in Boston, is one of these people. Her memoir is striking in its direct and often painful portrayal of her experiences as healthcare proxy for Mike Riegle, a gay friend. Hoffman struggles with anger and resentment as her life becomes subsumed by the daily logistics, issues, and problems of a man in the process of dying. We hear of Riegle's life, we meet his friends, and we watch his death, all through Hoffman's unflinching eyes. A foreword by Urvashi Vaid (*Virtual Equality*, LJ 10/1/95) helps to place the book within a necessary political perspective. Those who have been touched by AIDS as well as caregivers who struggle with their conflicting feelings should read this work. Recommended for most public libraries and all academic medical collections.?Jerilyn Veldof, Univ. of Arizona Lib., TucsonCopyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I knew Mike Riegle in high school but saw a totally different Mike 30 years on through the book when he was on his death bed. The book is a testimony to the love he engendered in the author and the others who cared for him.

Touching, inspiring and brought back memories of friends lost in the early days of HIV-AIDS. Amy Hoffman provides a heart-rendering account of her times helping friends in need.

The author, Amy Hoffman, writes about her friend, activist Mike Riegle, with whom she shared a long history of activism in the gay community and elsewhere. When Mike became increasingly debilitated by AIDS, Hoffman agreed to serve as the person to make health care decisions for him,

and spent much time helping him negotiate his illness, along with other friends in the gay and lesbian community. I thought this book was great on my first reading of it, but a second reading really revealed to me the concise and intelligent way in which Hoffman artfully delivers the complex and painful truths and ambivalencies of her life and the lives of others. One theme explored in this memoir are the importance of the "created" family of friends in the gay and lesbian world, and how this family is often illegitimized when the "real" family shows up for a crisis...or a funeral. Another has to do with the real difficulties in loving other people, despite your pledges to them, especially when they are demanding and irrational--and they are dying, and you feel that you should be acting like a saint! I found this book particularly meaningful, having recently lost a dear (and complex and difficult) friend to AIDS, and working with feelings of guilt at not having done enough for him, but I think other readers would also enjoy it for many reasons, including its caustic wit, well-articulated rage, innovative narrative structure, and relevance to lesbian and gay lives. I recommend that you buy this unique, original, and affecting book, and encourage the author to keep on writing!

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