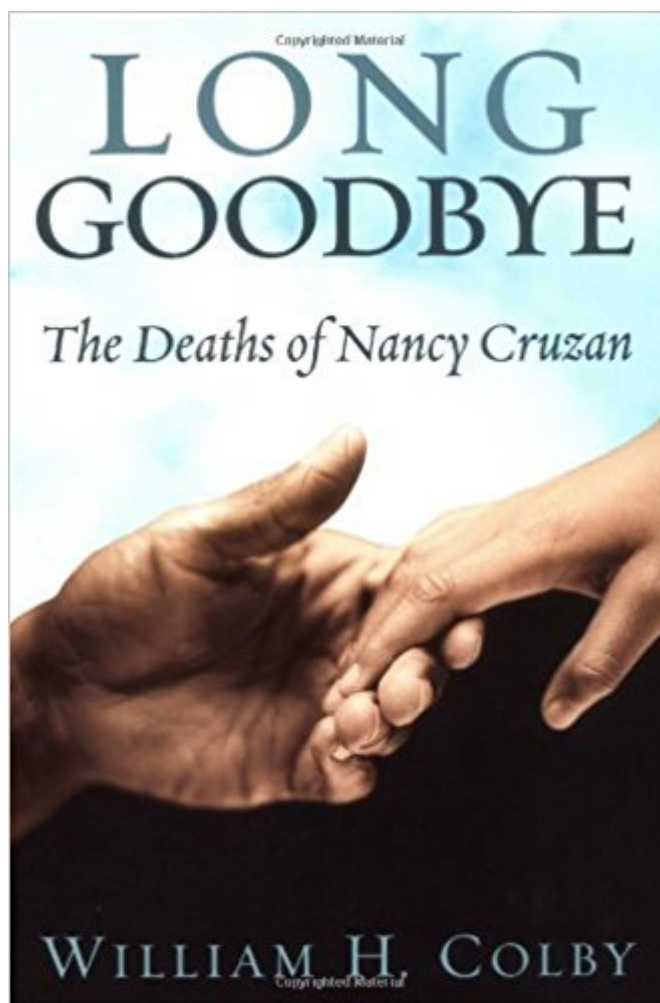


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Long Goodbye: The Deaths Of Nancy Cruzan



Synopsis

As the trial over her fate rages in a stately old courtroom in southwestern Missouri, the unmistakable voice of Ted Koppel tells the nation about Nancy Cruzan: "This is, at one and the same time, one of the simplest and one of the most complicated stories with which we have ever dealt." *Long Goodbye: The Deaths of Nancy Cruzan* follows an ordinary family's extraordinary journey to the United States Supreme Court. The book looks behind the scenes at the painful human cost exacted in a highly public legal battle. It is the true story of an American tragedy; a tragedy that could visit any of us in an instant. On a black January night Nancy Cruzan's 20-year-old Rambler flies off the road and travels the length of two football fields before flipping to a stop. Nancy is thrown out face down on the cold ground, apparently dead. But not quite. Five years later, Nancy has not emerged from her coma, and her family makes the grim request that the state hospital remove Nancy's feeding tube, which the family authorized years before when hope remained. But the state refuses, and the battle begins. Before the battle is over, powerful forces in society will team up to oppose the family; including the Missouri Attorney General, Missouri Governor John Ashcroft, United States Solicitor General Ken Starr, and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Near the end, protestors from around the country converge on Missouri, and attempt to storm the hospital. Their fight reaches its climax, and resolution, shortly after midnight on a bitter cold Christmas Day. This blue-collar family keeps one goal from beginning to end; trying to do what they know in their hearts their loved one would want them to do. In the process, they help to raise the consciousness of a nation, and "free countless Americans of some of the fears attending death," according to the *New York Times*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In 1987, as a young lawyer, Colby took as his first case what appeared to be a simple probate issue--guardianship rights of the parents of a young woman who was in a persistent vegetative state after being severely injured in a car accident. Because the Cruzans wanted to remove their daughter's feeding tube, the case generated a firestorm of publicity and protests from right-to-lifers. Drawing on the taped recollections of Cruzan's father and his own records, Colby chronicles the stark human drama of a family forced to live its most intimate moments in the courts and the media. He tracks the case from its beginning in probate court in a small town in Missouri to the U.S. Supreme Court. After three years of litigation and seven years spent in a vegetative state, Cruzan was finally permitted to die. This is a truly riveting look at the case that sharpened public debate about the medical and legal issues surrounding brain death and the right to die with dignity.

Vanessa Bush
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"A righteous,... riveting, and often moving legal tale. Bill Colby takes you on a wiiiiild journey."
--James Ellroy, author of the New York Times bestseller L.A. Confidential

Best argument for a living will!!!! No family should have to go through this. In Oklahoma if you are in a hospital that will not honor your wishes, they must move you to a faculty that will.

As much of an interesting and well written legal drama as this book is, the real benefit to the book is the natural discussion that it leads to regarding what you would want to happen to you if you were unable to make decisions for yourself....a conversation everyone should have BEFORE something tragic happens. Understanding and seeing close up what these decisions do to friends and family where no directive has been given is imperative, and this book does a fantastic job of that. While ultimately sad, heartbreaking, frustrating, anger-inducing...this topic applies to everyone regardless what side of the fence you are on. Simply put, a must read.

This book addresses the very difficult issue of allowing death to come when medical science creates a body in a permanent vegetative state. It is well written from the perspective of the attorney

who represented the family of Nancy Cruzan in this heart-wrenching story. I've read it once and plan to read it again. I highly recommend!

Great book, sad story. We all need the right to die with dignity.

Fast delivery. Wonderful book!

I had to get this book for a class, and though I thought it would be dry and boring, I actually got really into it!

I really am enjoying this book. Although I am reading it as an assignment, I believe I would have read it regardless.

During my training as a chaplain at Baylor University Medical Center, it was considered part of the "dues" of training that one would take lots of being on-call at the hospital for handling of emergencies. To that end, there was a "call room" where a chaplain could catch a little sleep, while waiting. On one of those sleepless nights in the call room, I viewed a Frontline special on the story of Nancy Beth Cruzan. She was a young woman, fully alive, who, as a result of a terrible accident, would become a test case for end-of-life matters for years to come. After seeing that special, I was deeply touched by the need to convey what our wishes were for the ends of our lives. The Nancy Beth Cruzan case took the better part of ten years before resolution. The lawyer who fought for her right to be disconnected from the feeding tube was William Colby, the author of this outstanding book. Those of us on the front lines of trying to help families prepare for the issues they will face at the end of life will find insight into the ramifications of that case, as well as grist for the mill of the work that we are doing. Colby is a highly readable author (at times, I felt like I was reading a Grisham novel), the Cruzan's case is deeply compelling, the story is truly tragic, and readers will come away with an appreciation of the law and concepts that are involved in pursuing these matters. There are several important story lines running throughout this volume: There are the lawyers, one who pulls an unexpected punch; the politicians, aiming for re-election; the Cruzans, especially Nancy's father, Joe, a salt-of-the-earth laborer, broken to the core over the loss of his little girl; a common sense probate judge, just trying to do the right thing; and the right-to-life movement (with whom we generally have sympathy, but not in this case). Indeed, under the skillful telling of Mr. Colby, law itself becomes a character, fickle at times, inflexible at others, and, at the

last, compassionate. ElderHope heartily recommends this excellent book.

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