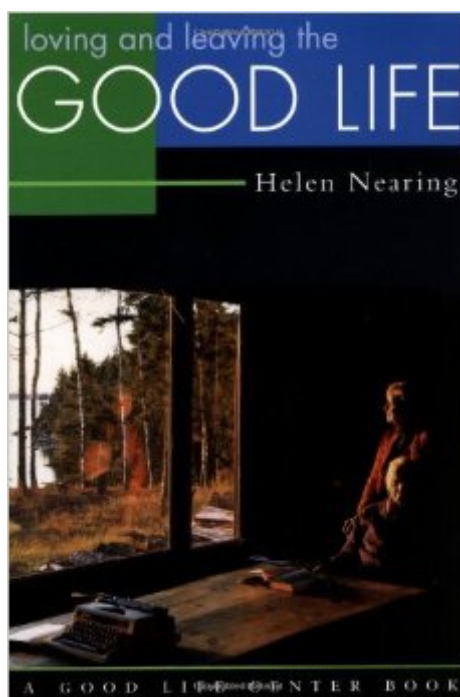


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Loving And Leaving The Good Life (Good Life Series)



Synopsis

Helen and Scott Nearing, authors of *Living the Good Life* and many other bestselling books, lived together for 53 years until Scott's death at age 100. *Loving and Leaving the Good Life* is Helen's testimonial to their life together and to what they stood for: self-sufficiency, generosity, social justice, and peace. In 1932, after deciding it would be better to be poor in the country than in the city, Helen and Scott moved from New York City to Vermont. Here they created their legendary homestead which they described in *Living the Good Life: How to Live Simply and Sanely in a Troubled World*, a book that has sold 250,000 copies and inspired thousands of young people to move back to the land. The Nearings moved to Maine in 1953, where they continued their hard physical work as homesteaders and their intense intellectual work promoting social justice. Thirty years later, as Scott approached his 100th birthday, he decided it was time to prepare for his death. He stopped eating, and six weeks later Helen held him and said goodbye. *Loving and Leaving the Good Life* is a vivid self-portrait of an independent, committed and gifted woman. It is also an eloquent statement of what it means to grow old and to face death quietly, peacefully, and in control. At 88, Helen seems content to be nearing the end of her good life. As she puts it, "To have partaken of and to have given love is the greatest of life's rewards. There seems never an end to the loving that goes on forever and ever. Loving and leaving are part of living." Helen's death in 1995 at the age of 92 marks the end of an era. Yet as Helen writes in her remarkable memoir, "When one door closes, another opens." As we search for a new understanding of the relationships between death and life, this book provides profound insights into the question of how we age and die.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In today's youth-obsessed contemporary culture, it is a rare treat to be able to find a book so full of loving wisdom written by someone so involved socially, politically, and spiritually in the events of the 20th century. Therefore, I was enthralled in reading Helen Nearing's moving, absorbing and often quite disarming recollections and reflections on her life, both as an individual and as the lifetime partner of one of the most celebrated critics, iconoclasts and individualists of our time, economist, philosopher and social critic Scott Nearing. The two lived lives singularly devoid of apologies, half-efforts, or excuses, living it largely on their own terms, based on their own labors and ingenuity. Early in the 1930s they struck out from New York City to escape the Depression and social convention by starting a revolutionary experiment in rural Vermont. In many respects the experiment succeeded, yet they were never able to transform it from a personal adventure to one more largely social and community-based in the Vermont setting. With the coming of ski resorts and encroaching exurbia in the early 1950s, the Nearings moved once again to rural Penobscot Bay in Maine to start again. Of course, in due time they were suddenly "discovered" by the baby boomers and the counterculture in the late 1960s, and became the elder statesmen of the 'back-to-the-land' movement of the late sixties and early seventies. In all this, Scott and Helen continued in their commitment to a socially aware, civically responsible, and environmentally sustainable way of living. By the time Scott died at age 100 in the early 1980s, thousands of curious counterculture hopefuls made the pilgrimage to visit with the Nearings at their celebrated farm in rural coastal Maine.

When your 100-year old husband of 55 years has passed on and you, at 88, can see your own end, and when you have spent most of those years seeking and living the good life, and when you take the time and trouble to record your thoughts for posterity, it is surely worthwhile for us, the readers, to take note and reflect on what might be of value in our own goal of living the good life. This is not a biography of the husband, Scott, nor an autobiography of Helen but it is offered as a tribute to Scott's being as Helen knew it. She wants Scott to be remembered as an unassuming, kindly, wise, husband as well as a principled, uncompromising, intellectual radical; she also wants to share with us his peaceful, intentioned, and premeditated ending. Born in the upper echelons of society, he worked alongside immigrant laborers in the Pennsylvania mine run by his grandfather. This was a formative experience that resulted in his speaking publicly in his early twenties on liberal reform.

”Even before I began the study of economics,’ he said in an early lecture, ‘I was impressed by the monstrous inequality which exists between the rich and the poor in modern society. The rich enjoy wealth, leisure, and boundless opportunity. The poor are overwhelmed by misery, overwork, and insanitation. The rich have a heaven of opportunity; the poor a hell of misery, and the heaven of the rich is founded upon the hell of the poor. If I was impressed by these conditions before I had studied them, I was appalled after having given them careful consideration. I had heard of poverty; I believed that misery and vice existed, but I was not aware that they were prevalent in every town and city of the land.

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