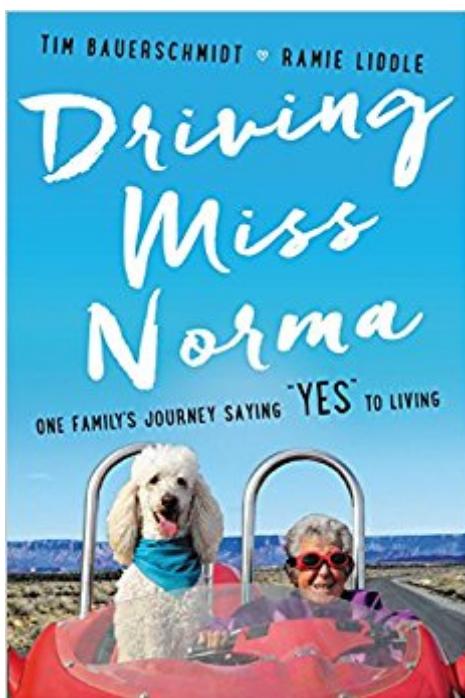


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# Driving Miss Norma: One Family's Journey Saying "Yes" To Living



## Synopsis

When Miss Norma was diagnosed with uterine cancer, she was advised to undergo surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. But instead of confining herself to a hospital bed for what could be her last stay, Miss Norma, a newly widowed after nearly seven decades of marriage, rose to her full height of five feet and told her doctor, "I'm ninety years old. I'm hitting the road." And so Miss Norma took off on an unforgettable around-the-country journey in a thirty-six-foot motor home with her retired son Tim, his wife Ramie, and their dog Ringo. As this once timid woman says, "yes" to living in the face of death, she tries regional foods for the first time, reaches for the clouds in a hot air balloon, and mounts up for a horseback ride. With each passing mile (and one educational visit to a cannabis dispensary), Miss Norma's health improves and conversations that had once been taboo begin to unfold. Norma, Tim, and Ramie bond in ways they had never done before, and their definitions of home, family, and friendship expand. Stop by stop, state by state, they meet countless people from all walks of life—strangers who become fast friends and welcome them with kindness and open hearts. Infused with this irrepressible nonagenarian's wisdom, courage, and generous spirit, *Driving Miss Norma* is the charming, infectiously joyous chronicle of their experiences on the road. It portrays a transformative journey of living life on your own terms that shows us that it is never too late to begin an adventure, inspire hope, or become a trailblazer.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"For the first time, as Bauerschmidt writes in this endearing memoir, they got to know one

another as adults, and their trip transformed into a warm, thoughtful, and meaningful conversation on family, aging, caretaking, and what happens when you look to other ways to heal besides Western medicine. (Publishers Weekly, Starred Review) "Depicting the ageless human capacity to learn and grow, the authors celebrate life and offer a heartfelt vision of what dying a good death really means. An uplifting and life-affirming memoir." (Kirkus) "This is a delightful chronicle of a family determined to celebrate life rather than dread death, and everyone can learn from their courage." (Booklist, Starred Review)

When Miss Norma was diagnosed with uterine cancer, she was advised to undergo surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. But instead of confining herself to a hospital bed for what could be her last stay, Miss Norma, a newly widowed after nearly seven decades of marriage, rose to her full height of five feet and told the doctor, "I'm ninety years old. I'm hitting the road." And so Miss Norma took off on an unforgettable around-the-country journey in a thirty-six-foot motor home with her retired son Tim, his wife Ramie, and their dog Ringo. As this once timid woman says "yes" to living in the face of death, she tries regional foods for the first time, reaches for the clouds in a hot air balloon, and mounts up for a horseback ride. With each passing mile (and one educational visit to a cannabis dispensary), Miss Norma's health improves and conversations that had once been taboo begin to unfold. Norma, Tim, and Ramie bond in ways they had never done before, and their definitions of home, family, and friendship expand. Stop by stop, state by state, they meet countless people from all walks of life—strangers who become fast friends and welcome them with kindness and open hearts. Infused with this irrepressible nonagenarian's wisdom, courage, and generous spirit, Driving Miss Norma is the charming, infectiously joyous chronicle of their experiences on the road. It portrays a transformative journey of living life on your own terms that shows us it is never too late to begin an adventure, inspire hope, or become a trailblazer.

This was the best book I purchased all year. Scratch that, this was the best 10 books I purchased all year. I bought one for myself and 9 extra to share with the hospice nurses I work with, instructing them to "pass it on" when done. Followed Miss Norma's journey on Facebook in "real time" last year and hoped beyond the odds that her journey would not end. Relived the journey through this very excellent book and LOVED it. It is engaging, honest, well written and interesting. The pictures keep things real and help tell the story. It was amazing to read how the people and towns embraced Miss Norma and her mission, and renewed (a little) my optimism and belief in the good in people. The

writing style, alternating back and forth between Tim and Ramie, works well and their different perspectives and understanding of events is refreshing. Even though I promised myself I wouldn't, I flew through this book in 3 days and then was sad when it ended. It's a great book! Really gets you thinking about how we "do" death, old age, terminal illness, and life, in our culture, but don't get me wrong, this is not a sad depressing book. It's a book about life, adventures, family, living, and the nitty-gritty hard stuff. I wished this book could go on and on, more adventures, sequels. But I suppose the sequel is how we carry on and live our lives, now, having read the book and having "known" Miss Norma in whatever sense we each got to.

What a wonderful book! We all need to think about alternate solutions and end of life care. Cancer does not have to be a death sentence. As Miss Norma said to her doctor, "I'm 90 years old and I'm hitting the road!" I'll be saying that a lot in my future.

I followed Miss Norma's travels as soon as I saw the story on the CBS evening news. Having recently lost my dad to a long, drawn out illness I applaud them for their decision to take their beloved Miss Norma on a final adventure. The book is beautiful and I have bought one for myself and two for gifts. I gave one to my elderly mother who is in the early stages of dementia and she has passed it on to a friend. You have no idea the effect this story will have on the necessary discussion of end of life matters. God bless you Tim and Ramie (and Ringo) for the pleasure you bought to your precious mother in her last year

One of the best inspiring books I've read. I felt like I knew Norma, Tim and Ramie. There should be more doctors advocating this type of end of life instead of operation after operation and miserable stays in hospitals and long term care. I know not everyone can just pick up and travel the country but at least taking more time to show a loved one a happy end. I think this should be a must read for anyone 40 and over. Thank you so much Tim and Ramie. I feel so close to all of you now.

This book is a fantastic read about one family's response to a cancer diagnosis! The chapters written alternately by Norma's son, Tim and her daughter-in-law, Ramie chronicle their journey on many levels: places they visit, buried grief, drifting family connections, learning to laugh and experiencing joy. One of my favorite moments is when they visit a cannabis shop in Colorado to find better pain relief for Norma. The description of the setting and Jim's teenage encounter with Norma and a joint, are hilarious and poignant all in one. I love all the wonderful pictures in the book of

Norma's exuberant face as she sees various sites, the family pictures and especially the ones with her grand-dog, Ringo beside her. Ramie mentions reading Atul Gawande's book, *Being Mortal*, just before learning of Norma's cancer. The book helps Ramie and Tim better understand that "going on a road trip" could extend Norma's life far longer than traditional cancer treatments. Their trip is an affirmation that "Norma is not done yet; she still has curiosity and wants to have fun." As I read Gawande's book and this one, I wish I had read them both before my parents were facing death. I wonder how I could have changed my interaction with them and perhaps helped them have some joy or another laugh before taking their last breath? I will never know, but I am thinking I will give our adult kids a copy of this book so they know I want to go on a road trip instead of the nursing home or a cancer center!! What if more children chose this kind of adventure with their dying parents?

This book does prove that there can be joy and happiness as our life on earth comes to a close. Miss Norma enjoyed every minute of her travels with her son and daughter-in-law, came to see so many wonderful vistas she traveled across this country, had so many new experiences, tried new things, made friends everywhere she went, and she never gave up on living her life to the fullest as long as she was living... Lessons to be learned for all of us who followed along on her journey. This book of her travels is well written, had some wonderful pictures of her travels inside, and even when the story came to an end, I knew Miss Norma would always be part of my life.

This most amazing book is about living and loving the life you have much more than counting the days remaining.

Having gotten super attached to Miss Norma's journey and posts on facebook, I hoped this book would be a collection of the FB posts in book form, so I'd have them to look through again and again. Oh, but instead, it was like having her come back to life and share more of herself with us. I swear by reading the book I could even hear her laugh and tones of speech. Tim and Ramie rounded out our beloved Miss Norma by filling in her history for us, fleshing her out all the more. Have a big box of tissues near the end, because even though I knew what was coming, I couldn't have imagined how powerful those final days and conversations were! I'm thrilled to have gone to San Juan Island to walk in her footsteps and visit her memorial tree right after finishing her life's story. I will be recommending this and buying it as gifts for the long haul. Hers is a legacy I want everyone to experience and be inspired to emulate.

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