

A single nurse in her 50s changes from hospital to home care. Laugh, cry, and be inspired by her home care visits. Amy, a person of faith meets Liza living in her car and Nolan, a widowed school teacher. The three confront the future.

Home Care

By Susan Snyder

Order the book from the publisher BookLocker.com

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/12483.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**



Home Care

Build on the future
and leave the past behind.

Susan Snyder

Copyright © 2022 Susan Snyder

Print ISBN: 978-1-958877-20-3

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-88531-299-8

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Trenton, Georgia.

Printed on acid-free paper.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

BookLocker.com, Inc.

2022

First Edition

Table of Contents

Clarkson, Pennsylvania April 2010 Forced to Make a Career Change	7
Home Care Visit #1.....	16
Who Needs Her Most, the Patient or the Dog?	21
Reflections and Connections	26
Giving Thanks.....	32
True Heartaches.....	35
Saving All the News That’s Fit to Print	40
First Night on Call.....	46
Trust Your Instincts	51
Gaining Trust.....	59
Keeping the Faith	67
Watch Out or I’ll Sic My Dog on You	71
New Beginnings	76
Critters Out of Control	79
Glad It’s Friday	85
Weekend Relapse	89
Full Steam Ahead	95
Know When to Ask for Help.....	101
From Farm to City Life.....	111
New Horizons.....	118
Being There for Others.....	123
Seeing is Believing.....	133

Making Connections	144
Letting Go.....	163
Confronting the Past.....	167
A Door Closes, A Window Opens.....	180
Times They Are Changing.....	185
Moving Forward.....	199
A Time for Love	214
Changing Pathways	227
Confidence Boosters	253
Lighten Up.....	264
Knowing Your Worth.....	276
All Wrapped Up.....	312
Coming Together	331

Clarkson, Pennsylvania April 2010

Forced to Make a Career Change

The weather matched Amy's mood to a tee. The rain, blowing across the yard in sheets, drenched her as she ran from the car to the porch. She entered the house and threw her keys on the kitchen table, knocking over the salt shaker. Remaining in her wet clothes, she slumped down in a kitchen chair.

Seeing the salt spilled on the table, she moaned, "Great, add that to my bad luck." She folded her arms on the embroidered tablecloth, laid her head on top, and cried.

Clarkson Hospital was phasing out all licensed practical nurses. For months, the rumors were that Clarkson would follow the national trend; RNs as clinicians, with patient care assistants doing more hands-on care. She'd graduated from Clarkson Community College's LPN program in 1980. Her path in life had been challenging, losing her mother to cancer at age 12. Her dad, a chronic drunk, had hardly been able to put food on the table for her and her younger brother Terry. While in high school, she worked after school and sometimes during school in a vocational program. A scholarship had helped her go to college, but she also paid the household bills and raised her brother.

The rain clattering on the tin roof of her rental cottage couldn't drown out her sobs. She lifted her head and stared

out the kitchen window with its floral curtains, thankful for her home, but how long would her savings hold to pay the rent and utilities? She knew the farmer she rented from would give her some leeway. She owned a 1990 Chevy Sprint, but it would soon need tires. Her sensible spending had allowed her to save, but she needed that for retirement.

Today was her last day of work. The hospital had discarded her like a piece of outdated equipment after working for 30 years. If married, she could retire, but that wasn't an option. Yesterday's newspaper had only a few jobs listed for LPNs. Most of the ads were for home care nursing but having hospital experience didn't exactly prepare her for such a career change.

Matty, a 2-year-old Border Collie, laid her head on Amy's lap and gazed up with limitless dark eyes. Amy embraced the sweet face that seemed to be responding to her sadness. The dog was probably hungry, wondering when she would open a can of food and feed her. With that chore to accomplish, her sobs ended, and her ideas for the future began to emerge.

"No use feeling sorry for myself, huh, Matty. It's not going to put food on the table or pay the rent, is it?"

After feeding the dog, she made herself a tuna sandwich, lacking the energy to prepare anything else. She sipped hot tea and read over the classified. Her eyes caught onto a company called Skilled Care for Seniors. It was a health care service paid through Medicare where her job would be primary nursing care and education. It might be the answer;

tomorrow, she'd look into it. The rain had stopped, so time to take Matty out for an evening walk.

Her home was a simple one-story bungalow with a covered porch across the front. The farmer had built it for one of his daughters, then the daughter got married and moved out of the area, so now he rents. The exterior walls of shingled cedar gave off a clean woody fragrance. There was a small fireplace in the living room that she'd only used once in ten years. She found it too much trouble carting in wood and dealing with the soot that got on everything.

"Come on, Matty, cheer me up. Let's go for a stroll," she said. The gravel drive led a short way to a paved road, enough of a walk after being on her feet all day. Matty focused on sniffing out critters, straining on the leash to find the best scent. Amy took several deep breaths to settle her mind, but there was so much conflict. It would be a long sleepless night.

Amy dodged the puddles, but Matty pranced straight through. Good thing she had old towels tucked under the porch chair to wipe her down before coming into the house. The wet dog smell would be noticeable this evening.

Birds were chirping their good night calls, but she wasn't very versed in bird language. However, her farmer friend, Carl, could identify many and do lifelike calls in return. He owned the farm across the meadow with his wife Gina and two young sons, Armin and Erik. Carl's grandparents had settled there from Germany.

The sun was setting as she walked back toward the house. Orange, pink, and purple layers spread as the blazing sun slipped behind the trees. She tried to collect her thoughts believing tomorrow would be a new start. Then she spoke out loud to Matty, as she often did. "I may be an old dog, but I'm not too old to learn new tricks, right Matty? You wouldn't know anything about that since you're still a young pup," she said with a laugh.

That night she had difficulty sleeping. Matty slept next to her, feet pushing against her back. She felt hungry since she hadn't eaten much for supper, but her churning stomach could be apprehension. Patience never came easy. When something needed doing, her nature was to get right on it. The agency opened at 8:30, but she didn't want to show up looking too desperate.

She usually woke around 5:30 for her shift at the hospital. Though she was wide awake, she forced herself to stay in bed. She closed her eyes and offered a prayer of thanks and direction for the day ahead.

"What's the rush, Matty? No one needs me to be anywhere this morning—only you, when it's time to go out and get fed. I'm glad I have you. It gives my life purpose." She immediately admonished herself; no way was she going the depression route. She coaxed Matty off the bed, straightened the covers, and headed for the kitchen. No day could get started without coffee.

She got the coffee brewing in her under-the-counter Mr. Coffee. Then she leashed Matty, stepped into her crocs, put her windbreaker over her PJs, and headed down the lane to get the paper. The day was clear, with slanted sunshine sifting through the tree branches. She could hear the rain dripping from the trees, and she accidentally brushed a pin oak's overhanging branch giving her and Matty a slight shower. Matty looked at her as if to say, "Was that necessary?" For Amy, the look brought a needed chuckle. "Now, you won't need a bath this month."

The crisp air was revitalizing, and she felt a bounce in her step as she headed back to the house. Matty sensed her change in attitude and pranced in front of her. She broke off a few sprigs of forsythia growing alongside the porch, hoping the bright yellow would provide a needed boost to the morning. They were hungry for breakfast, and it was time to knuckle down and make some headway.

Matty lapped up her foul-smelling dog food like it was filet mignon. Amy pulled out a box of Rice Krispies and milk from the refrigerator. The shelves were getting bare; she'd need to go grocery shopping soon. French vanilla coffee aroma filled the kitchen. She took her coffee with milk only and liked it hot. She ate her cereal and looked through the paper spread out on the table, seeing the Skilled Care for Seniors ad. Even though it was just after 8 AM, she took a chance and dialed.

"Good morning, Skilled Care for Seniors; this is Fern. How can I help you?"

“I’m calling about your ad in the paper hiring nurses. Would that also be LPNs?” Amy said with some assertiveness in her voice.

“Oh yes, we hire LPNs. Do you have experience?” Fern inquired.

“Clarkson Hospital laid me off due to their elimination of LPNs. I worked there since I graduated in 1980.” Amy hoped she didn’t sound like the cast-off she felt she was. “I love nursing and thought home care would be a good fit.”

“Well, you do have some experience, don’t you! It sounds like we need to sit down and talk. Could you come in later this morning? Say around 10:30?”

“Yes. I have your office address and look forward to finding out about your agency. See you then.”

“Wow, Matty, this could be it. What’d you think? Would I be a good home care nurse? Of course, I’d have a lot to learn and adjust to, but I need to work. It would pay better than learning how to run a cash register at the supermarket.”

She decided against wearing scrubs. She needed to look businesslike for this interview; slacks and a light sweater in a color that would brighten up her pale skin and graying hair. Blue always made her look lively. She pulled her hair back in a clip, applied light makeup, and was ready to go by 10:00.

“Matty, wish me luck. Means whether we eat or not, so you better have your paws crossed.”

When she entered the business, a small woman in her 40s with short brown hair was sitting at a desk. She wore reading

glasses perched on the tip of her nose and bright red lipstick. The room had several desks set up to be workstations. Amy wondered how big an agency this was and how complicated and arduous her workday would be.

“Hi, I’m Amy Dawson. I spoke with Fern on the phone earlier about a possible job.”

The woman stood and extended her hand. “Hi, I’m Fern. Glad to meet you, Amy. Have a seat, and we’ll get to know each other. Can you tell me a little about yourself?”

“Well, I’m 50 years old, unmarried, and live with my dog, Matty. Although working in a fast-paced hospital made it difficult to do all I wanted, I loved my job. I’ve never done home care but enjoy teaching patients, so I’m sure I’d find the job satisfying.” Amy thought it might have come off corny, but it was sincere.

“I’m sure working in a hospital has given you excellent nursing experience. I know you’ll grasp the home care part in due time. I’ll need to get your references from the hospital. Here’s the written job description you can look over and the agency’s expectations. We’ll need the forms filled out with address, home phone, cell phone, etc.”

“I don’t have a cell phone. I never needed one up to now. That might sound kind of dumb. I guess it will be necessary when I’m out on the road.”

“Yes, a cell phone will be vital for this job, and you’ll also need to learn how to use a pager. We’ll get you prepared with informational sessions and handouts. We’re a small agency

with seven nurses, three physical therapists, two occupational therapists, and five licensed nurses' aides. We collaborate with two other agencies to use a speech therapist, a mental health nurse, and a social worker. We work together to cover the patients in the best way possible."

"Well, it's time for me to enter the 21st century. With some help, I'm sure I can manage. The job description fits my resume, so I'll be glad to fill out an application."

"Right now, I have an opening for three days a week and on-call Wednesday evenings. Would that work for you?" Fern asked.

"I could work with that."

"Then I'll get back to you once I have all the filled-out forms and your references have cleared. After that, I don't see any problem giving you the job."

"Thanks. I'll take care of the cell phone and hope to hear from you to start my orientation. It's been nice talking with you, and I'll be grateful to have employment."

After filling out the forms, Amy left the office with a feeling of fulfillment. She could do this. Knowing where the nearest cell phone company was, Amy drove there to complete that part. She worried about it being an added expense but found out they had a reduced rate for medical employees. She walked out of the store with a basic flip phone in her pocket.

She looked over the worklist at home, checking out what she might have to refresh. They were all nursing functions she'd done throughout her nursing career. Dressing changes,

foley catheters, ostomies, and tube feedings were technical functions all nurses learned. However, managing her time, driving instructions, and documentation would be new.

“So Matty, this might mean changes in our daily interactions, but we’ll work it out. We’ll see each other more if I’m assigned to patients nearby. I won’t have to get up so early; time for a morning walk.” Matty responded with a yawn, stretched out on the rug, and went back to sleep.

Friday afternoon, Fern called saying she was hired and would start orientation on Monday at 9 AM. She celebrated that evening with a glass of Riesling wine, her only alcoholic drink. She was anxious about the days ahead but knew she could learn what she needed to. Her goal was to be an excellent home care nurse to senior patients.

“Here’s to me, taking on a new and exciting job!” Then apprehension began to creep in and for some reason, doing jigsaw puzzles with her mother came to mind. Her mother, weak from cancer treatments, helped her bring them to completion. She and her mother worked on them for hours, overwhelming at first, but then a picture emerged. She’d manage this job change step by step until she was an accomplished home care nurse.

Home Care Visit #1

After a week of orientation, Fern felt Amy was ready to do a visit on Friday with Caroline, one of the other LPNs. She would undertake the actual admission, and Caroline would watch and assist if needed.

The client was an 82-year-old woman with recurrent CHF (congestive heart failure). The agency's goal was to educate, assess and keep her from hospital readmissions. The office had considered setting up a monitor in her home for BP, weight, and signs of fluid overload, but her daughter thought it would be too confusing.

Amy had set up the visit the evening before, so she and Caroline arrived at the home close to 9. The client, Martha Clemson, let them in. Everything about her was perfectly done; a little face powder, eyebrow pencil, rose-colored blush, and matching lipstick. She wore a buttoned, white blouse with a circle pearl brooch at her throat. Her gray cardigan matched her gray skirt, which came down to mid-calf. Amy wouldn't have been surprised to see seamed stockings, but she wore pantyhose with her black pumps. Before the questions began, Martha went to the kitchen to make tea.

Caroline smiled and shook her head. "Sometimes, you have to go with the flow. A woman her age wouldn't have

someone visit and not offer a cup of tea or coffee. It's hard sometimes to stay on course, but you'll get the hang of it."

While drinking tea, Amy began the assessment. Martha's blood pressure was 160/80, and she had mild swelling in her ankles. She instructed Martha on the need for daily weights. Unfortunately, when they located the patient's scale, it looked over 50 years old and didn't register accurately. Amy would have to get her daughter to buy a new one.

Amy reviewed the hospital discharge medication sheet. Martha reported she rarely took her water pill because it interrupted her phone calls with her "lady friends." "When we get to the good parts, I have to put the phone down and run to the lavatory. One time, my friend got annoyed and hung up, and I never did find out how the story ended."

"Martha, you need the water pill to remove excess fluid. In addition, it helps to lower your blood pressure and keep you out of the hospital. You could talk to your friends in the morning before you take the pill or in the afternoon when the pill has finished working."

She switched to the importance of a low sodium diet to prevent water retention. Martha jumped up and said she had to turn down the stove; she was making pork and sauerkraut. With a deep sigh and a quick look at Caroline, Amy realized that teaching seniors could be more complicated than she thought. Martha shouldn't be eating sauerkraut since it was high in salt. It wouldn't be easy to change the lifestyle of an

82-year-old lady, but she might have better luck instructing her daughter.

Amy reviewed some written instructions and made a notation to talk with her daughter at an early date. Martha thanked them for coming and hoped it wasn't an inconvenience. She said she wouldn't need any more visits since she was doing well on her own. However, upon leaving, Amy convinced her that since they were friends, she'd feel better if she checked in a few times in the coming weeks.

Caroline felt Amy had done great for her first time in a patient's home. "You must act like a detective, but not so snoopy that the patient gets offended. No matter what the home looks like, it's their place, and they're comfortable in it even if it's the worst ever. I'll level with you, some will be bad, but we still have to maintain respectability and control our responses."

When they returned to the agency, Amy finished writing up the admission. She spoke with Fern about goals and concerns for the coming week since Martha's insurance had given them four visits for education and assessment. Amy spent the rest of the day reviewing policies and performance expectations. The information gathered inspired her, and she began to see that caring for and getting to know seniors would be rewarding in many ways.

Fern approached her in the late afternoon. "Caroline felt you did an excellent job with Mrs. Clemson today, and I'm short on staff for the weekend. So, how would you feel about

doing an admission tomorrow? The patient had a total knee replacement and will be discharged later today. Physical therapy needs to see her tomorrow afternoon, so I thought we could get a nurse to do the initial assessment in the morning. I'll be on call if any problems arise."

"Things went well today, so I guess I'm ready."

"Good. It'll mean only working in the morning, and you can take half a day off on Monday. How does that sound?"

"Sounds fine. I'll connect with the patient tonight to set up the visit."

Matty met her at the door, tail wagging, happy to see her. "Yes, I know you're dying to know how my day went or needing to pee? Either way, I'm glad to see you."

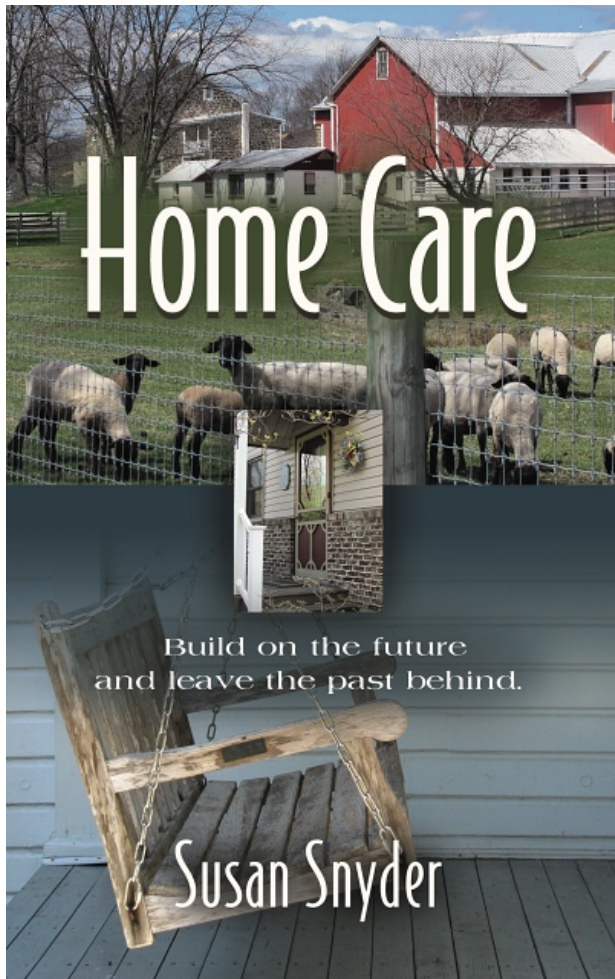
They took a walk so Matty could do her business and follow up on new scents. Amy reflected on how the visit had gone and where she might improve. Was she making accurate assessments? "Stop second-guessing yourself. You've been assessing patients for years; being in someone's home isn't going to make that much of a difference."

Amy fixed a simple supper of leftover beef stew and reheated biscuits. She washed her few dishes and left them to dry on the drainer. She took about an hour to finish charting and preparing for Saturday. Mattie, sprawled out on the kitchen floor, lifted her head and glanced her way as if to say, "How about some time for me?"

She knelt in front of her, stroked her muzzle, and got a sloppy kiss. "Okay, let's go before it gets dark." At the word

“okay,” Matty was up and sliding on the linoleum floor, rushing toward the door. “Settle down,” she said with a firm voice. At the same time, she’s smiling at Matty’s backside and tail, twisting back and forth in excitement. Nothing like the happiness of a collie.

The bats were starting to swoop overhead in the twilight, and a few stars were twinkling. Way off, she heard a cow mooing, waiting to be milked. The quiet of the countryside was always an excellent time to meditate, yet she felt a stab of loneliness. Is her life primarily caring for Matty and showing up for work? It seemed the blessings most women received were not to be hers.



A single nurse in her 50s changes from hospital to home care. Laugh, cry, and be inspired by her home care visits. Amy, a person of faith meets Liza living in her car and Nolan, a widowed school teacher. The three confront the future.

Home Care

By Susan Snyder

Order the book from the publisher [BookLocker.com](https://www.booklocker.com)

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/12483.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**