

Miss Norma's Book Club

We share our story because we learned along the way that Norma's journey was inspiring families to talk about difficult subjects. Our greatest hope is that in some small way Norma's odyssey will help one more family have the conversations they need to have; leading to clarity, dignity, and a sprinkle of joy at the end of life.

We have learned that our story means different things to different people. There is so much to talk about and we wish we could sit down with you and have a chat.

We have included some conversation starters here. Feel free to take them or leave them, and add your own.

The Conversation

- Tim and Ramie had difficulty with having the end-of-life conversation with Tim's parents. What has your experience been with your loved ones? Have you put it off? What would make it easier to undertake?
- How did you feel about Norma's choice to go on the road instead of doing surgery and cancer treatment? Do you know anybody who has made a similar decision? Would you? Why or why not?
- How does Norma's choice compare to life in a nursing home?
- What did you think of Miss Norma's steadfast decision to not seek any medical intervention? Did your thoughts change from the beginning to the end of the book?
- If you received a terminal diagnosis would you want treatment? How aggressive? If you had no family to help and inspire you, would your decision be different? Would your age matter? Have you clearly shared your wishes with your loved ones?
- During her travels, many of Norma's symptoms of her disease lessened or even went away. What are your thoughts about modern medicine, in regards to medications and their side effects? What about the alternative treatments she tried? Did her experience change how you think about alternative medicine?

Lists

- Ramie and Tim struggled to learn what might be on Norma's "bucket list."
- Do you have a bucket list? What do you think about such lists?
- What's on your bucket list? What are your top picks?

- Would you do anything differently if you knew you had a certain amount of time?
- If you have a bucket list, has anything been added since reading this book?

Travel

- Have you ever lived a nomadic life like Tim and Ramie? If not, would you like to do that and if so, where would you want to go?
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Stuff

- Tim, Ramie and Norma left without cleaning the house and only took two throw cushions out of practicality, rather than attachment. When you travel, do you have to clean to perfection before leaving?
- If you were leaving like Norma was, what would you take with you?
- What role do possessions play in your life?

Pets

- What role do you think Ringo played in Miss Norma's journey for everyone involved?
- Do pets bring you joy, peace or anxiety?
- Ringo was an important part of Norma's life while in the RV. Do you think that pets offer health benefits to their humans?
- How did Ringo help Norma? Tim and Ramie?

Story

- Everyone has a story. Tim often talks in the book about getting to know his mom better during their trip. Do we ever truly know our parents?
- Miss Norma was a World War II veteran. Did you recognize any of Miss Norma's values in the people you have known from the "Greatest Generation?" Maybe that is you!
- Did reading *Driving Miss Norma* bring back memories that you have made with your family?
- Are there untold stories you would like to share or explore with your loved ones before it is too late?
- What do you wish you knew about relatives or what should you ask while you still can? What should your children/others know about you that they don't already know?
- Why did Miss Norma and her story resonate with so many?

Impact

- Miss Norma became very popular on Facebook with thousands of followers from around the world tracking her adventures. How would you feel about that many people following you and your life/death?
- Norma seemed to become more extroverted and open to new experiences throughout her journey. Do you think that this was due to her advancing age, her terminal diagnosis, or was Norma always an outgoing person but never given the opportunity to share that side of her personality?
- What do you think was the biggest impact Miss Norma had on the world?

Kindness

- Were you surprised by the kindness that showed up at every corner of Miss Norma's journey?
- Has it inspired you to think about the good around us?
- Have you changed because of this?

Care

- Have you been a caregiver for an elderly person? How do/did they approach their end-of-life? From their examples, what would you do differently?
- What do you think about caregiving nomadically?
- Many people feel the most comfortable when they are in their own home. How would you feel about being sick and dying far away from home and your normal environment?
- What did Tim and Ramie do to care for themselves during their time with Miss Norma? How important is self-care when so much of your time and energy is given to others?

Flavor

- In the chapter called "Flavor," they decide to eat something distinctive from each state. Would you try Rocky Mountain "oysters"? The raw oysters in New Orleans? Key lime pie, Fried green tomatoes? Lobster?
- What role does food play in your life? Are you a cook or a baker? Is food simple sustenance? A hobby? A means of communication? A love language, like it is for Tim?

Faith

- How important is faith at this time in a person's life?
- What do you make of Stacy as their "angel?"

- How do you explain the check (from selling the car) for the exact amount of Ringo's surgery and other "coincidences?"

Presence

- Spending time with Miss Norma taught Tim and Ramie to slow down and "enjoy the moment." Are there times when you need that reminder, too?
- What is your favorite way to slow down?

Lessons

- We all transition eventually. How did Norma approach her daily life knowing that death was imminent? How does the reality of death influence how you approach your daily life?
- What did you learn the most from Miss Norma, Tim, Ramie and Ringo's story?
- What was the most memorable part of their story?
- What do you think Miss Norma enjoyed the most from her travels?
- What do you think Tim and Ramie enjoyed the most?
- What would you have enjoyed the most if you were part of the journey?

Connect

Please tell us about your book club gathering, add a discussion topic or just say "hi!"

We have been known to pop into virtual book clubs if we are available. Send us a note and we'll see what we can do.