When Life Meets Death:
Stories of Death and Dying, Truth and Courage
by Thomas William Shane; 1998; Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press; 146 pages; $29.95

When Life Meets Death is a book of stories about authentic experiences of ordinary people as they experience the death of a loved one. Dr. Shane writes stories based on his own loss as well as his professional experience as a chaplain. Story topics range from the death of an elderly parent, the loss of a child, or the traumatic loss of a loved one in the Oklahoma bombing.

The book is divided into four sections that represent different times along the continuum of the experience of death. Part I includes 15 stories about the time prior to the loved one's death when the reality of death is evident. Part II includes 11 stories that occur at the moment of death and describe what it is like to say the final goodbye to a loved one.

Part III includes 11 stories addressing traumatic death. Readers can see the conflicting feelings of the survivor ranging from anger, rage, grief, and futility as they cope with their untimely loss.

In Part IV, there are eight stories addressing the aftermath of the loved one's death as the person goes through the grieving process and journeys toward healing. The author presents eight steps in the grieving process and offers some helpful guidelines for people who have lost a loved one.

These are stories that will touch your heart. Some stories may make you cry. Some will make you think back to your own experiences when a loved one died that may bring tears or even a smile as you remember your loved one. This is a wonderfully poignant book about the experience of death. It is suggested reading as a resource for all ages, educational levels, and religious sensibilities.

Patricia O'Leary, DSN, RN
Associate Professor
Middle Tennessee State University
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Cancer in the Elderly
by K. Redmond and M.S. Aapro; 1997; The Netherlands: Elsevier Science; 98 pages

This book represents the proceedings from the meeting of the European Oncology Nursing Society and the European School of Oncology held in Paris in January, 1997. The book is a brief outline of issues pertinent to elderly individuals suffering from or being treated for cancer and is aimed at oncology nurses. The book most likely has been translated from another language, resulting in many incomplete sentences, inaccurate English grammar and spelling, and other translation errors that often impair the readability of the text. Several studies appear throughout the text that are not referenced.

The incidence and prevalence of cancer in older adults are discussed in the beginning of the book. This engages readers because the need for this information is enormous. The statistics accompanying the description are startling. However, many of the statistics reported in the charts and tables as well as many of the references used throughout the book are from the 1980s. The psychosocial issues associated with cancer were understated in the earlier part of the book but covered in greater depth toward the end.

In chapter two, the authors mention classifying the elderly population using a system other than chronological age. Yet no information regarding the alternative system, Quality Adjusted Life Years, accompanies this discussion. The chapter begins to explore the physiological growth of cancer within an aging body. However, the authors say, "the interaction between aging and neoplastic transformation...is certainly beyond the scope of the book."

The application of cancer and treatment to older adults is summarized in one or two sentences at the end of each section. Further discussion of the reasons older adults often avoid cancer screening may have been a useful addition. Chapter five reveals some contradictions between support for cancer treatment and poor outcomes but would benefit from further discussion. The book appropriately discusses functional status, cognitive status, and depression in relation to preparing older adults for cancer.

The book provides a clear outline of the issues relevant to older adults with cancer. Because of its brevity, the book may be appropriate as an adjunct to undergraduates interested in expanding their knowledge regarding cancer in elderly individuals. For practicing nurses, especially those familiar with elderly individuals, the book adds little new information to the current knowledge base.

Meredith Wallace, MSN, RN, CS
Assistant Professor
Southern Connecticut State University
New Haven, Connecticut