

**THE MAKING OF A NURSE BY TILDA SHALOF
(McClelland & Stewart-\$34.95) 314 pages**

Reviewers are not supposed to get too emotional when it comes to reviewing books, but I could not help thinking, what if one day I got sick and could not take care of myself? Would I get a nurse like Tilda Shalof if I ever went into a hospital? I would hope so.

Tilda Shalof is certainly the proverbial angel of mercy, and in this, her second book, THE MAKING OF A NURSE, she once again relates tales of life before nursing and after being in the business for twenty-five years, she writes with great empathy and humanity, even for patients and fellow nurses who were less than exemplary human beings.

Her first book, A NURSE'S STORY, was just as engaging, and a great read into the aspects of hospitals, that many of us will never see or know about.

In her latest book, Tilda discusses how she took care of her parents, especially her mother, who was feisty, antagonistic, and difficult to get along with, once her disease took over. She had a degenerative neurological condition, with much of her anger being the disease talking. Her mother loved to sing, and when she thought she could not sing any longer, that is what worried her the most and caused her stress.

Tilda's father died suddenly, leaving the family in shock. She admits that based on the behavior of her mother, wishing that her mother would have died instead of her dad.

Tilda originally could not find employment in Canada, so she decided to head to Tel Aviv, to work in a hospital. Her mother resented her leaving her in care of someone else, but Tilda knew what was necessary. She did not stay there too long, coming back to Ontario Canada, filling in at different hospitals, finding some of the shifts emotionally and physically draining.

Tilda says at one point, "Of course I was still a nurse, but I had sunk into such a pit of depression and self-pity, that the prospect of taking care of others, of assuming responsibilities as I had done in Israel....seemed too much for me. For a while, I couldn't imagine I'd ever be able to nurse again."

But Tilda did recover from the lethargy, and settled into the hospital where she was assigned. When her mother died, it left a sense of loss for the family, and in a way, Tilda felt some relief the ordeal had ended.

The book is filled with dozens of stories about patients Tilda encountered, including a rapist murderer whom a fellow nurse had the philosophy, "I don't care who you are. I'm going to give you the best care I possibly can."

Tilda employed that philosophy on a daily basis, whether the patient was cooperative or filled with anger. One summer, Tilda was a nurse at a summer camp, which was so different from being back at a busy hospital. She had her moments there with broken bones, bug bites, the flu, homesick children, and even a young child asking for a condom.

THE MAKING OF A NURSE is another heart-warming tale of a caring woman, who no matter how long she empties bed pans, gives needles, saves lives, etc, she will never stop caring for the human condition. **RATING: 4 1/2 BOOKMARKS**

RELATIONSHIPS



**A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK FOR THE BOYFRIEND
BY FELICITY HUFFMAN & PATRICIA WOLFF
(Hyperion-\$26.95) 288 pages**

If the name Felicity Huffman sounds familiar, you are right. She is one of the Desperate Housewives on the popular ABC television show, married to actor William H. Macy. Her writing partner for this book, Patricia Wolff, is a noted producer of movies and plays.

The pairing of these talented ladies makes for a fun book, one that is a laugh riot from beginning to end. On the cover it notes, "boyfriend not included" but if you follow the advice in the book, who knows

where luck and good fortune may lead you.

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Shelf Life July 2007 Issue # 68



The Gazette (Montreal, QC)			Order/Commande 16487
Date 19.05.2007	Circ. 136271	Page BK5	1 / 4

CARING ANGEL, EXHAUSTED DRUDGE NURSE'S SECOND BOOK IS AS COMPELLING AS HER FIRST

ROBERT WIERSEMA CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

HOW DO we see nurses? I have two very different perspectives on nurses and the nursing profession; I suspect many of us do.

The Making of a Nurse
By Tilda Shalof
McClelland & Stewart,
328 pages, \$34.99

Tilda Shalof at the Toronto General Hospital in 2004: she steers clear of histrionics in her prose and allows the inherent drama of her stories to do the work.



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On the one hand, I recall those I've known in the warmest of lights. As a child, I spent an inordinate amount of time in the hospital and, as I suspect often happens, I fell in love with my nurses: their attention, their care and their compassion warmed an otherwise unpleasant time, while their skills and competence compensated for some of the failings of the other medical professionals I was in contact with.

On the other hand, while the nurses I met and observed when my father-in-law was gravely ill recently were all highly competent and professional, they were all also harried and stressed, clearly overworked and under-recognized, stretched to their very limits.

It occurred to me then that the only thing I would like to be less than a patient in a hospital would be a nurse.

Toronto nurse Tilda Shalof deftly confronts this dichotomy – of beneficent angel in scrubs and exhausted, broken-spirited drudge – in her new book *The Making of a Nurse*. Coming on the heels of her surprise 2004 bestseller *A Nurse's Story*, this follow-up memoir mines much of the same territory (Shalof's career in the ICU in particular) for new material. Thankfully, nursing brings with it an endless supply of fresh stories, and the second book is as fresh, and as compelling, as Shalof's debut.

Shalof is, it seems, a born caregiver, with a gift for compassion and patience that revealed itself at an early age. At age 6, she was already caring for her mother, watching over her as she degenerated from Parkinson's disease and a related neurological disorder. When her father was diagnosed with diabetes and a heart condition, he, too, fell under Shalof's care. She was then 12 years old.

Shalof's decision to become a nurse was almost pre-ordained. She got a degree from a nursing college, and spent a year working and training at a hospital in Tel Aviv. Upon her return to Canada, however, the certainties that had guided her seemed less fixed.

Her father was dead, her mother committed to hospital, and Shalof was homeless, jobless and, for a time, hopeless. She lived on the streets, wandering by day, riding the subways by night.

It was her own caring, her own need to reconnect through her work as a nurse, that saved Shalof. After a stint as an agency nurse (essentially a temping position), she joined the ICU at Toronto General as a member of Laura's Line, a close-knit group of nurses who worked as a unit for several years. Shalof had, it seems, come home.

The biographical outline of *The Making of a Nurse*, while compelling, serves primarily as a structure on which Shalof is able to hang both anecdotes drawn from her nursing years



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and her thoughts on the calling that she has served for more than two decades. VICTORIA TIMES COLONIST

The book is an enthralling marriage of drama and introspection, narrative and analysis that never flags and never loses the reader's attention.

Shalof shows a deft hand with characterization, capturing with a minimal flourish the nurses and doctors she has worked with and the patients she has worked on.

Her writing is clear with an almost clinical distance that, somewhat surprisingly, allows room for clearheaded sentiment that never descends into sentimentality.

Shalof avoids histrionics in her prose and wisely allows the inherent drama of her stories to do the work.

Much of *The Making of a Nurse* reads with a crackling vitality, an as-it-happens energy that captures the intensity of the environment and her work, a world in which "another day at the office" is an ongoing confrontation with illness and death. The chapter-length depiction of a "typical" night in the unit is an eye-opening, fast-paced account of moments of crisis punctuating tedium and paperwork, teamwork and camaraderie balanced against private doubts and struggle.

Juxtaposed against these accounts of life in the ICU are quieter, more intimate passages chronicling the true cost of caring (as opposed to that bureaucratic euphemism "the cost of care").

Through the former members of Laura's Line, Shalof is able to look at life after nursing, and we are privy to her private struggles, including a moral dilemma concerning a young nurse in the ICU who simply doesn't measure up. A chapter chronicling her summer as a camp nurse is a refreshing, almost comic interlude against the unrelenting pace of her life in the city and the hospital.

What comes across most clearly (and surprisingly, at times) is the love Shalof feels toward her work. Even her darkest moments in the ICU are illuminated by this affection, by the clear sense that she has found her true work, and that by embracing her calling she is making the world a better place, in whatever limited way she is able.

The Making of a Nurse should find a variety of readers: readers of memoir; nurses, those seeking a good story all will find much to savour here. One hopes, though, it will find readers among people seeking a way to find meaning in their lives, a way to put their caring and patience to good use. It is comforting to know that there are nurses (and writers) like Tilda Shalof out there; would that there were more like her.

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YVONNE BERG CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

An in scrubs

Tilda Shalof opens door to the life and death drama of ICU

BY ROBERT WIERSEMA

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On the one hand, I recall nurses I've known in the warmest of lights. As a child, I spent an inordinate amount of time in the hospital and, as I suspect often happens, I fell in love with my nurses: their attention, their care and their compassion warmed an otherwise unpleasant time, while their skills and competence compensated for some of the failings of the other medical professionals I was in contact with.

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Shalof is, it seems, a born caregiver, with a gift for compassion and patience that revealed itself at an early age. At age six she was already caring for her mother, watching over her ADL (Activities of Daily Living) as she degenerated from Parkinson's disease and a related neurological disorder. When her father was diagnosed with diabetes and a heart condition, he too fell

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Author Robert J. Wiersema lives in Victoria. His book, Before I Wake, was published by Random House last summer.



YVONNE BERG, FOR THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

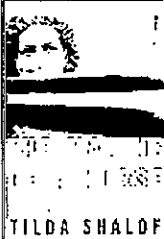
Toronto intensive care nurse Tilda Shalof invites readers behind the screens of ICU in her second book about nursing

THE BOOK

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of A Nurse**

BY TILDA SHALOF

McClelland &
Stewart, \$34.99



Monday » April
23 » 2007

An in scrubs angel

Tilda Shalof opens door to the life and death drama of ICU

Robert Wiersema

The Ottawa Citizen

Sunday, April 15, 2007

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