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A BITTERSWEET SEASON

***Caring for Our Aging Parents — and Ourselves.* By Jane Gross. 350 pages.**

Alfred A. Knopf. \$26.95. Combining personal narrative with practical advice, as Jane Gross does in “A Bittersweet Season,” is a tricky business, writes the reviewer, An-



nie Murphy Paul. A reader swept up in a story is apt to resent the intrusion of brass tacks. And a reader looking for how-tos will have little use for the details of an author’s own tale. Ms.

Gross, a former reporter for The New York Times who wrote pioneering stories about AIDS and autism, here takes on a subject she knows from experience: the trials, of caring for an aging parent. She mixes an account of her mother’s difficult last years with a “hard-earned list of tips” on eldercare. Her chronicle of her mother’s decline is intimate and affecting, and her advice to readers is insightful — but the shifts between the two are often far from smooth. Feel the whiplash as she veers between frank confession and finger-wagging lecture. Still, she has a forthright story and trenchant advice.

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