



## The Widows' Handbook: Poetic Reflections on Grief and Survival

Edited by  
**Jacqueline Lapidus and Lise Menn**  
Foreword by Ruth Bader Ginsburg

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*The Widows' Handbook* is the first anthology of poems by contemporary widows. This stirring collection celebrates the strategies widows learn and the resources they muster to deal with people, living space, possessions, social life, and especially themselves, once shock has turned to the realization that nothing will ever be the same. As Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg says in her foreword, losing one's partner is "a loss like no other."

*The Widows' Handbook* includes the work of 87 American women of all ages, legally married or not, straight and gay, whose partners or spouses have died. Some are already published widely—including more than a dozen prizewinners, four Pushcart nominees, and two regional poets laureate. Others are not as well known, and some appear in print for the first time here.

Only poetry can speak such difficult truths and incite such intense empathy. With courage and wry humor, these women encounter insidious depression, poignant memories, bureaucratic nonsense, unfamiliar hardware, well-intentioned but thoughtless remarks, demanding work, spiritual revelation, and unexpected lust, navigating new relationships in the uncertain legacy of sexual liberation. They write frankly about being paralyzed and about going forward. Their poems are honest, beautiful, and accessible.

Anyone who has lost a loved one or is involved in helping the bereaved will be able to relate to the experiences conveyed in *The Widows' Handbook*. But, while both men and women understand the bewilderment, solitude, and change of status thrust upon the widowed, women suffer a particular social demotion and isolation, shown here in all its variations.

**Jacqueline Lapidus**, a Boston-based editor, teacher, and translator, holds degrees from Swarthmore College and Harvard Divinity School. She has published poems in many periodicals and anthologies and in three collections: *Ready to Survive*, *Starting Over*, and *Ultimate Conspiracy*. Her Significant Other died suddenly in 2004.

**Lise Menn**, professor *emerita* of linguistics at the University of Colorado (Boulder), has written, coauthored, or co-edited seven books and more than 50 peer-reviewed articles. Her poems have appeared in anthologies, and she is preparing a chapbook of recent work. Her second husband died of cancer in 2006.

Praise for *The Widows' Handbook* (Lapidus & Menn, eds.)

"When a partner dies, we begin a long journey down a path we'd rather not take, and we may imagine that life could never be bearable again. The poems in this "Handbook" offer much more than guidance or comfort. Their searing honesty and vivid depictions of resilience offer us invaluable reassurance that our grieving, however painful, will not destroy our capacity to live with meaning--and even joy."

--Judy Norsigian, *Executive Director of Our Bodies, Ourselves and Co-founder, Boston Women's Health Book Collective*

"I wish this collection had been available when I was a new widow. What a spectacular group of women this is! If they were my circle of friends or therapy group, I would have gone to every meeting. Their reactions and experiences as widows are varied, but each woman brings her own special intelligence to mourning, managing alone, and making a new life. Poetry makes those experiences immediately, emotionally accessible."

--Jacqueline M.S. Winterkorn, M.D., Ph.D., *Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology. Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology in Neurology and Neuroscience at Weill Cornell Medical College; Attending Ophthalmologist, New York-Presbyterian Hospital*

"*The Widows' Handbook* is a powerful emotional guide for the bereaved, organized by the evolving experiences of 87 women. But it's also far more—a testament to the redemptive power of poetry even in the darkest hours of life, offering proof that when we put love and art together, life can face death on equal—or better—terms."

--Daniel Menaker, *former Editor-in-Chief of Random House Publishing Group and fiction editor of The New Yorker, , author of A Good Talk and My Mistake.*