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TITLE INFORMATION

DAVID A. JONES

Always Moving Forward

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BOOK REVIEW

A health care innovator shares his pioneering life in Jones' memoir.

The author's candid autobiography vividly captures the life of a self-made businessman with a celebrated reputation for immense contributions to the health care industry. The memoir—constructed from a series of nearly 40 personal interviews with Jones, his wife, Betty Ashbury, his friends, family members, and colleagues by journalist Bob Hill—chronicles the businessman's life, starting with his humble beginnings in Kentucky. In the blue-collar town of West Louisville, Jones was raised as one of six children in the 1930s. His mother, Elsie, worked nights in a laundry, while his father, Evan, a steelworker, carpenter, and handyman, struggled to find work toward the end of the Depression. Jones' studious diligence in school garnered him an ROTC scholarship to the University of Louisville before he graduated and began a three-year stint at sea with the United States Navy. This military service honed his natural leadership talents: At age 30, armed with a Yale law degree and married to his college sweetheart, Betty, he and fellow lawyer Wendell Cherry each borrowed \$1,000 to open a nursing home together. That business would become Extendicare, Inc., which then blossomed into the hospital chain and health insurance behemoth Humana, founded on Jones' core principles of balanced quality and productivity. The company's success afforded generous contributions from the Jones family to a variety of causes. Humana went on to create a center for artificial heart implantations, and Jones' philanthropic ambitions were further realized with the establishment of a 4,000-acre, environmentally secure parklands area. Additionally, in keeping with his and his wife's modest demeanors, they anonymously donated millions in personal and family foundation grants to educational programs.

A heavily detailed tome, the book lingers over anecdotes and striking reminiscences regarding the watershed events of Jones' life, realistically portraying both the good and the bad. He is open about the moment he realized his entrepreneurial venture in nursing homes had become a runaway success and about the accomplishments of his children. He's equally revealing when describing sharing cramped quarters with Betty in a metal, coal-heated Quonset hut in Connecticut while he attended Yale, his and his Humana executives' experience of the horrific, debris-strewn Manhattan streets on Sept. 11, 2001, and visiting a Romanian AIDS hospital's children's ward ("Boone Powell and I lifted some of the children from their cribs and held them in our arms, a simple act that seemed to provide comfort, but which was rarely performed in the overcrowded and understaffed locations"). Readers in the health care industry and general business arenas are certain to glean a great amount of rousing encouragement from the innovative concepts and leadership lessons Jones became known for and will learn how, through simple acts of generosity, philanthropy can be beneficial to both one's business reputation and one's soul. Jones died of cancer in 2019. His legacy continues through the Humana health care network and in this book, in which friends and family celebrate his life and work.

An inspirational homage to a trailblazing humanitarian entrepreneur, dedicated family man, and "endless optimist."

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