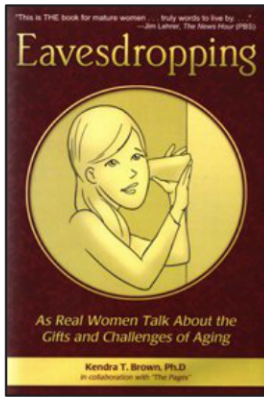


# LITERARY

## Scene

By Ryan G. Van Cleave



This month's featured author is Stuart, Florida resident Kendra T. Brown, Ph.D., a licensed psychologist whose forthcoming book is *Eavesdropping: As Real Women Talk About the Gifts and Challenges of Aging* (Rainbow Books, trade paper, 128 pages, \$14.95). What made this book leap out at me was a prepublication endorsement from Jim Lehrer of PBS's The News Hour. He wrote: "This is THE book for mature women and those in anyone's life – including my own. The understanding and advice about everything from traveling alone (demand a good table at a restaurant, stay in bed and breakfasts) to dealing with profound loss (sometimes means liberation, don't be a victim) are truly words to live by. Onward!" Here's the thing – Jim Lehrer's right. Dr. Brown's book is full of honesty and wisdom about the process of aging. That's why it's the only new book I'm writing about this month rather than the two or three I normally cover. It deserves the extra space and attention. You'll

see what I mean in a moment.

The book came about because Dr. Brown got intrigued by how many older women sought therapy for situational depression, despite having thrived in life before. Seeking solutions for her clients, she organized a group (self-named "The Pages"). She knew she could count on these ever-evolving women to discuss vital issues of aging, such as love and loss, troubles and triumphs, obstacles and opportunities. As the group met, they quickly proved themselves to be just what she was looking for: women who cut through the bull and talked about real issues in useful ways.

The idea for this book's title and format – eavesdropping on those important, rarely heard conversations – came when The Pages realized how informative, supportive, and humorous the meetings were and how much others would benefit by hearing them. "We decided the book might be more interesting if it were fictionalized," Dr. Brown explains. "We created the format: a woman comes to the library seeking a quiet place to work on a project. She finds the ideal place, and is soon frustrated when she is interrupted by the chatter from the next room (us!). She begins to purposefully eavesdrop on us and write down what she hears." With that format in mind, they hired local writer Pat Austin to get them started. Then Dr. Brown took over and finished the book.

Dr. Brown pointed out that most of us see media images of retirees having constant joy and fun: golfing, swimming, relaxing poolside, playing cards. It's common, though, for people who have all that recreation to still feel unsatisfied; perhaps questioning their own experience. "What's wrong with me?" Dr. Brown responds, "A happy, satisfying life is about re-creation, in addition to recreation." In short, we need new role models for joyful, active longevity! Sticking with what worked in your 30s and 40s is rarely the answer. "Most importantly," Dr. Brown adds, "one doesn't have to do it alone. Membership in informal groups, like The Pages, is one way to gain wisdom and be supported. In our culture, with its emphasis on individual effort, we can fail to appreciate the benefits of community."

Here's just a bit more of the wisdom and insight that this book provides:

*Everyone needs a "village" (a network of support) of her own making.*

*Villages are not static. They can and do change, sometimes because we want them to change and other times because change is inevitable.*

*We are interdependent by virtue of being human. Celebrate that fact.*

For those who want more than just eavesdropping on these delightful, revealing conversations, Dr. Brown includes four nuts and bolts appendices (on such things as writing an ethical will and starting your own version of The Pages group) and a short but solid list of suggested readings. Like Lehrer said, this is a good book for the adult women in anyone's life. Go ahead and give them the latest Janet Evanovich or Mary Higgins Clark book for Christmas, but feel free to slip this one in the stocking too!

*Eavesdropping: As Real Women Talk About the Gifts and Challenges of Aging* is available now from Rainbow Books (an independent Florida publisher). Get a copy at Amazon, [www.bookch.com](http://www.bookch.com), or your own favorite virtual or real-world bookstore. Learn more about Dr. Brown and The Pages at [www.KendraBrownPhD.com](http://www.KendraBrownPhD.com).