



# **Out of Joint: A Private and Public Story of Arthritis (American Lives)**

*Mary Felstiner*

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She begins, in the morning, by casing her joints: Can her ankles take the stairs? Will her fingers open a jar? Peel an orange? But it was not always this way for Mary Felstiner, who went to bed one night an active professional and healthy young mother, and woke the next morning literally out of joint. With wrists and elbows no longer working right, she'd discovered one of the first signs of rheumatoid arthritis, the most virulent form of a common disease. *Out of Joint* is her account of living through arthritis, a distinction she shares with seventy million Americans.

While arthritis pain affects one out of three Americans, this book is the first to tell the personal story of the nation's most common yet neglected disease. Part memoir, part medical and social history, *Out of Joint* folds the author's private experience into far-reaching investigations of a socially hidden ailment and of any chronic condition—how to handle love, work, sexuality, fatigue, betrayal, pain, time, mortality, rights, myths, and memory. Moving from the 1940s to the present, this story of one life with arthritis exposes little-known medical research and provocative social issues: alarming controversies over arthritis miracle drugs, intense demands concerning disability, and the surprising and disproportionate number of women affected by chronic illness. From this prize-winning historian comes a call for healing through history, a moving meditation on the way chronic conditions can be treated by enlisting the past.

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