

Memories and Musings

Stories revive special moments

A few days after my mother-in-law moved into an assisted-living residence, my husband and I went for our first visit. We did not find her in her room, so we went down the hall to try to find her. We found her walking toward us arm-in-arm with another lady, chatting away. When she saw us she beamed, "I want you to meet my best friend." Then she turned to her companion with a puzzled look and asked, "What is your name?"

Sue Jessie Kerchenfaut
(Daughter-in-law)

My 80-year-old father was notorious for keeping his expenses down. Recently, at the end of a long day together looking at assisted-living facilities, he offered to buy dinner. While he could well afford it, this was an unusual gesture. After dinner, but before the check arrived, Dad handed me cash to pay the bill. Then he quickly disappeared into the bathroom. The cash was about \$10 short of the charge. Just as I settled the bill, he returned and, without a hint of curiosity about the tip or his change, put on his hat and graciously guided me out of the restaurant.

Bonnie Shetler
(Daughter)

I love my car. To be without it is to have my link to the outside world severed. I don't have a bike (my stationary bike takes me nowhere), the bus stops are far away, and my walking range does not include even a grocery store. My world will collapse when my children talk my doctor into telling me that I should no longer drive. Or maybe I will know to stop on my own when the day comes that I accidentally drive the car backward into the lake across the street, instead of forward into the garage.

Carol Wilson
(Recently retired)

My mother lived in her own home and enjoyed good physical and mental health to the end. She could afford a cleaning lady, her long-time hairdresser came to her house to cut and shampoo her hair, and her children were available to help her with transportation, household chores, and maintenance. She was surrounded

and loved by nine grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren. On her 93rd birthday she confided to her son that she was very tired and ready for the Lord to take her. That night, as she slept, her prayer was answered. May we all be so blessed?

Carol Wilson
(Daughter)

Realities surrounding the last years of my mother's life are blurred. I am fuzzy about whether I held her hand or her arm as we walked. I want to believe that we went to the park to smell the flowers. Did we go to the beach and watch the sun set? I think I remember listening to old records with her. I wish the line between reality and fiction was not so blurred. I want to be positive that I held her hand and not her arm as we walked—it makes such a big difference.

Michaele Bradley
(Daughter)

After my grandmother died, my father and his siblings were constantly checking in with my grandpa. They were concerned about how he was coping without his wife of 50+ years. They were especially worried about what he was eating since he had never done the cooking. One night my aunt called Grandpa and asked him what he was having for dinner. He tried to avoid the question, but my aunt persisted. He finally acknowledged he was having beans. She asked if that was all he was having. "Yes, it was" he replied. My aunt asked what kind of beans. "Jelly Beans!" he reported.

Katy Mason
(Granddaughter)

Anytime the family visited my parents' home, my father took the opportunity to fill the freezer with his favorite foods. No one was more appreciative of these treats than my young grandson, Charlie. At night, when everyone was asleep, my father would tiptoe silently into Charlie's room, tap him on the shoulder, and quietly whisper "Klondike time!" After my father's death, Charlie confided that his fondest memory of his great-grandfather was sharing those secret times in the night kitchen together.

Donna Hutten
(Daughter)

We spent two months after Dad's funeral sorting, tossing, and saving our parent's belongings, our childhood possessions, and even items belonging to other relatives who were deceased. Our parents saved everything. I found Grandma's old gas and water bills. We found a box of empty cereal boxes stacked neatly in two precise rows. Dad's old Marine footlocker that he took overseas with him was full of his uniforms, papers, and pictures. It looked as though it hadn't been opened during the four decades after the War. We found income tax returns dated back into the 40's and old deeds from the 1800's.

Lynnita Mattock

(Daughter and author, *When Our Parents Need Us: Caring for Aging Parents*)

Bill's widowed mother had lived alone in Iowa since 1975. Concerned about her advancing Alzheimer's disease, Bill came up with a plan to bring her back to his home for the weekend and then move her into our assisted-living facility on Monday. After her arrival he informed her of his intention. She refused to get in the car. He started each succeeding day with a renewed determination to persuade her, and ended each day in defeat. She was not going. Finally, after three weeks, Bill arrived with his mother. I asked him how he managed to convince her to come. He explained, "The doctor prescribed Xanax (anti-anxiety medication) for my mother. I took two this morning".

Yvonne Myers

(Professional Caregiver)

On a warm, lazy afternoon when Dad was spending one of his lengthy sessions on the commode and I was straightening the towel we kept on his recliner, he reached for my hand. I asked him "Are you ready to get up, Dad?" He said, "No, I just want to hold your hand." I stood there for a little while, my hand in his, savoring a rare moment of peace with my father. It was an honor. An honor to hold his hand. An honor to be with him. And most of all it was an honor to have the privilege of helping him through probably the most difficult time of his life.

Lynnita Mattock

(Daughter and author, *When Our Parents Need Us: Caring for Aging Parents*)