

**GERIATRIC CENTRAL
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**EVERYTHING BUT THE WHEELCHAIR RAMP
(By Cinda A. Berard © 2011)**

Where do I start? Geriatric Central is what I call my
parents

House. For it is there that I live with them. It wasn't always that way. I remember growing up on a spacious farm with an old farmhouse. There was my mom and dad, my five sisters and two brothers, and my invalid great grandmother who lived with us. And from time to time the occasional foster child that we would take in. Growing up one of eight children truly was an experience I shall never forget. I remember so many things of those days. Mostly the generations of wisdom from my grand parents, parents to us. The span of three generations and then a large family only added to all the things I learned and lived. I had since moved a long time ago from that old farm house. It got sold in the name of commercial progress and totally destroyed of all historical value and charm in the name of business. I had moved to other towns but have come out of necessity to move in with my parents. This was not my choice but destiny would have it so.

The house we live in now was started by my brother, who had a tragic accident. With the house not finished all the construction men and sub contractors came in record time and had the house completed within the month so my parents could move in as they had planned, for the other house was sold. This house is now twelve years old. And I can start from there with the story. When the house was somewhat new, I moved in. My dad having never truly mourned my brothers passing internalized it. That had caused a stroke that affects him even now so much later. I saw my parents age terribly. The loss of a child will do that

to you. My father has always been the independent type. He loved to mow his lawn. I think all men like the smell of fresh mowed grass. It does smell like fresh cut hay, a reminisce of the farm. He would do one part and I would take the second mower and do the other part. We always seemed to work together and in record time get it done. Then it was small things that were odd. He would mow the lawn close to the road where the culvert is. He would get stuck and all of us from time to time would pull him out. But he could go back in the same spot and keep getting stuck. He would go in the garage and get a huge metal bar with an iron wedge at the end and use it to lift the mower up. Total strangers would stop and get out of their cars and help lift the mower out of the ditch.

This got so bad that I would have to drive my car on the lawn, take a chain or rope and tie it to the lawn mower and pull it off the lawn. As time went on he would complain I was not doing a good job. I had a nice pattern up and down. He would take to mowing the lawn in various circles, making it look all cut up from the road. Then it was mom. One day I came home and thought, wow I smell a barbeque. Since when did mom get a grill? I walked into the house and found a skillet on the stove, black smoke everywhere with the skillet about ready to catch fire. I brought it outside and we had to air out the whole house. Mom put the skillet on with butter to heat it up to cook something. Then she walked away and forgot it. One day I came home from work, and mom was blaming

me for plugging the toilet. She said I used it and plugged it up with the water backing up through the ceiling into the cellar. The water was on the pool table which happened to be covered with my stack of blue jeans on top of it for quilting.

I ran upstairs and told mom off. I was yelling at her, telling her I had enough of her crap and I was not to blame. I did not use that toilet nor plug it. My dad was walking in at the moment and so was my nephew. It grew rather heated. I told mom she needed to get rid of her cheap water saving toilet and get one with a higher flush to it and this would not happen again. Needless to say mom apologized by writing a note on a three inch by three inch piece of paper leaving it on the counter for me to read. Dad asked if I read it, and I said no I threw it away. Then I got money and moved into an apartment. My dad at the time begged me not to move out but to stay to take care of mom. I said no and he made my life miserable about moving. I had to move all my furniture with no help from everyone with a disability and a bad back. I had re-sprained it at that time doing so.

One apartment was actually a house. I ended up leaving there when the landlord complained about supporting his daughter and boyfriend. I could feel a rent hike coming my way. So I left for a much smaller studio apartment. It was okay but my landlord was a 92 year old smoker. I could smell the smoke come in my side from her house through the electrical outlets. I was always fearful she would burn the house down. Her daughter in law got the house and sold it without

telling me until a month later. It was a verbal agreement between her and her friend that bought the house, a wealthy man always ready to make a buck. No one told me he would be my landlord. With great distaste in my mouth I had no choice but to move back home.

Life has a funny way of happening. As I lived there and worked full time, I was noticing more and more peculiar behavior. My mother I would catch her standing at the French doors looking outdoors wandering off in thought. She was a thousand miles away. Her memory was not what it use to be. I cleaned the bathroom for her. She was in a hurry to go to the grocery store. Being the fashion hound that she is, she grabbed a can to hairspray her hair. She did not have her glasses on so she grabbed basin tub and tile foam cleaner instead of hairspray. She sprayed her hair with it, making a white stiff glob in her hair like mousse. She was in a hurry so she said the hell with it and went to the grocery store anyways. She told me coming back home she got a lot of looks and stares. I bet she did! We had a good laugh over that I tell you.

My mother is the type that would be happy to live in an empty warehouse. She goes around looking at things and it will bother her all night long things that are not neat or orderly. She constantly gives things away. I bought her several silk night caps for her hair to wear to bed. She had too many and gave them away. Then she was looking for more because she accidentally threw her only one away. So she had to

go out and replace what she gave away. This is a pattern of getting rid of things, then replacing the very thing she got rid of. My advice to a care taker is to put it away out of sight and bring it back as if you bought it new. Never get rid of things.

There are other moments that are more advanced. When she goes to bake in the kitchen and forgets to put a major ingredient in. Or walks away and forgets she has it going. The other day she laid down for she was tired. I had already left. Something told me to come home. I find mom had water boiling on the stove with sugar in it to make hummingbird food. You don't need to put the sugar in it. You should put it in after the water has boiled. She has her way of doing it. So I pulled the paste off the burner, one inch from burning down to the pan. Sugar was coated all over the burners. I added water back in with ice cubes, and then I filled the humming bird feeder.

It is sad to watch a parent lose their short term memory, their long term memory and their memory in general. My father has dementia. He can look at me and say, "Who are you?" And I tell him I am his daughter and I live with him. Or he will say, "I hear you live here". And I say, "Yes dad, I live here with you". He does not always recognize me or my siblings. Those who live out of state he asks me, "Who are they?" He suffers little mini seizures in the brain which affects him. He was put on one medicine that made him a zombie. So we had to have it changed. There are days when it is filled with long dead silence. It is hard to find things that he can do or talk about. One

good thing is to get him out of the house for a ride.

I will never remember a few years back. This is a classic!

My mother was going to drive my dad to church Sunday morning. Well my car was close to the house very close to her car port. Mom went to back out her car and saw mine. Rather than wake me up to move my car, she asks my dad who has limited eyesight. He is guiding her to "angle" her car out of the garage to get around my car. However, mom angled it to the right not the left and was about to hit my car. What stopped her is she ripped her side view mirror off the car doing so. So she woke me up. With just a nightgown and barefoot I ran outdoors in the snow and moved my car. Then I had her pull back in the garage. I noticed some fluid had leaked out of her car and said it was not safe to drive. Meanwhile mom called my sisters husband to come up and look at it.

Well I managed to pop the side view mirror back on mom's car for her. Her car was leaking antifreeze. So mom decides to jump in dad's Lincoln and decided she was going to leave her car as is and take dad in the Lincoln to mass. She is four foot ten inches and was having a hard time adjusting his seat to drive. She could barely see over the dash! I told her she was forbidden from driving his car. So my brother in law said her car was okay to drive to mass and back. Then mom turns to me and asks if I want to go to church with them! I said, "I don't think so!" Then I went back inside. They were progressively becoming more like children around me. They thought these things were

funny and kept doing them.

Another time my mother honked the horn. I went to the garage and she wanted to know why her car was broke. There is a tire gauge clamp that holds it by the emergency brake. I told her that is what it was. Then she wanted to know what the light was on the dash. I said it was the brake light because her foot was on the brake. The more recent thing is she got out of her car and asks me what that noise is. She left the car running with the keys in it. Now she is deaf as a fart but will not get a hearing aide. I would be a millionaire for every time I have told her to get one. It is pointless and useless to say it anymore. If people call she will answer the phone. She will say, "I can't hear them" and hang up. If you do manage to talk to her she gets everything wrong. I use to yell to her across the room. Now I yell to her across the table.

My father has an automatic chair with a remote control that brings the foot rest up or the chair up to boost him out of the chair. I went down cellar for a minute. My mother was just in the other room. I came upstairs and my dad decided to get out of the chair. Instead of using the remote he got confused and tried to crawl off the end of the chair. He flipped the chair over with him on the floor. This is the second time he has done this. I yelled to mom in the other room and she did not even hear me. So I went in the room and yelled at her to come help me lift dad. She grabbed one arm and I the other one to lift him up to his walker and out in the kitchen.

I can see where my mom is overwhelmed with this

full time job of dad. And I can see where it is a chore for him as well. It is not easy on any of us to say the least. I can say that once it starts changing drastically you have to learn to laugh at things and find the humor in them. This is not always easy to do. I find that there are times I get upset, frustrated and angry. It is never at them but the situation. You have to take time out for yourself to renew your batteries. You have to have boundaries, learn to say no. I have siblings that would love to micro manage me and put me on their schedule. This is not a good thing and isn't always going to happen. You have to find ways of creatively defining your space. Learn to stick up for yourself without being disrespectful. You are never good for anyone if you don't take time for yourself. Don't feel obligated when you are not up to it. Nor feel guilty to say no.

I have found that you need a network. You need a good friend or therapist that you can talk to. They can help you work out your feelings which are just that, feelings. They do not define you or make you a terrible person for feeling them. We need to vent and doing so is very healthy. Take better care of your body. Eat right and exercise. Don't consume nervous eating. That will just put more stress on you. I have found that keeping a journal is a great thing. It helps you looking back after they are gone on the good points, the wonderful memories. You can relive the joys of the relationship and the journey getting there.

If there is a family pet they can be instrumental.

My mother just loves the cat. He helps her find love and peace when she is in turmoil. Growing up my dad hated cats. He has gotten so now he pets him. He actually calls the cat the dog from time to time. I just agree it never hurts. I also find not to correct my dad. It just makes him feel worse. And if they repeat themselves listen to it again. It won't kill you. It is never easy being with elderly parents. We always struggle to see them still as our parents, when in reality they have become the children and we the parents. This transition is never an easy one. The only advice I have for this is to do the fun things with them they use to do for you. And learn to pray and ask for guidance for you will need to lean on it.

No one likes to get old, grow old, feel old and become totally feeble and helpless. Patience is something we need everyday for ourselves, so much more for others. I will never forget the time mom had the television us so loud you could hear it down the road and around the corner. I live in the basement. It would come through the ceiling up over the noise of the furnace. One day I had all I could take. I was about to blow an artery. So I went to a store and bought the lawnmower hearing projection earmuffs, twenty one decibels. I got them home, put them on, walked upstairs and stood in front of mom talking to her. She split a gut laughing. It got the point across. I was using wads of Kleenex in my ears but it didn't block the noise out anymore.

Having to put up with their noise is deafening. Literally when you get older you will become hard of

hearing from their loud nonsense. Do what you have to for peace and quiet. Another time I stood there and lip synced to my mom with no words. She got quiet then realized what I did and laughed. Any little bit of humor you can add to the situation is good.

There is also the many times when my mother would lay back down exhausted. Meanwhile dad would wake up coming down the hall with his walker in his underwear wanting to know where mom is. Or I would wake up finding I had been locked in the cellar. I popped the lock open and mom tells me dad must have gotten up in the middle of the night. The kitchen light was on and the cellar door locked. This is no laughing matter. In their confusion they tend to lock the house up, regardless of if you live there or not. I am grateful he no longer drives. Since then Brian reversed the lock to the basement so that I can lock it at night. If Dad were to try to come down cellar he would not be able to.

That brings me to the biggie. Everyone with dread anticipates the day they have to take away the car keys. As dad's driving got worse, first it was questionable. He was driving home and got too close to the center line. His side mirror hit the other car going by. Coming home his mirror was hanging. I had to secure it with two rolls of electrical tape. Meanwhile the car dealer had to order the mirror. When they went to put it on, they commented what a good job I did with the electrical tape. The family does not make the decisions. My baby sister is in charge. She often comments they are "her parents". Need I say more?

She is the executrix. So when the possibility of the family help decide if he should not drive anymore a war ensued. It cost me two years of my sister and me not speaking. I did not start a campaign to do so. I have an older sister who used my concern to launch a campaign to do away with Dad's license, which was not of my doing. She took my observation and gave me the credit for her calling everyone up with it being "my idea" to have dad's license taken away. Every family has a sibling like this. In their mind they are being helpful, but it only causes more hurt feelings and heartburn. My advice to you if you have a sibling like that is this: Read the serenity prayer out loud. If you cannot fix your sibling, then remove them from your life. Once you remove the cause of problems, they will cease to exist. It takes courage and wisdom.

I can say you never say to a person with Dementia, "I am taking away" anything. You ask "would you like to give it to me?" Never "I am taking it away from you". They need to feel safe and secure and to be able to participate in the decision making. Family members need to support each other. They may not agree, but that is okay. The worse thing to do is argue in front of the parents. It makes them feel threatened that they will be abandoned. Home should be filled with what is familiar, safe and loving.

Dad did finally "give up" his drivers license. He mailed it back not renewed to drive. This has helped him tremendously. We keep his big car to drive him around in. This still gives him the dignity and status

that he has earned. It is only respectful
To comply with his wishes. My sister and her husband
do a wonderful job with the parents. I live here which
is something different. I am their security so they can
feel good about being in their home. My baby sister is
in charge of all the doctors and financial aspect of it. I
support my youngest sister in any way that I can.
There will always be heartburn or contention of others
who are jealous. Many sad things will come to the
surface with the passing of a loved one. I have heard
too many stories of people fighting over things or
money. You must be prepared for that. One should
just focus on the ability to reciprocate in kind for their
raising you. This is something that you can hold onto
and nobody can take away.

You will find yourself acting more and more like
your parents. Subconsciously you do that. I find that I
too will put the television very loud and walk from
room to room. It is a familiar noise in the background
to drown out the quiet. Also so you can hear the
commercials and when they end go back to your
show. We do become our parents, and this book is the
story of the transition of it happening to us. While
caretaking you are looking both forward and backward
at the same time.

Gradually you inch forward. I no longer desire a house
with a huge yard to mow or garden. I no longer desire
a two story house with extra stairs to climb. I see
things from their perspective and adapt to them
myself.

THE WHEEL CHAIR RAMP

We no longer are without the wheel chair ramp. Last year we finally had one built in the garage. Dad's legs have gotten very weak. He has difficulty walking. So we have the wheel chair ramp for his walker and occasionally the wheel chair when he is very tired and doesn't feel like walking. I use to joke about it with my past co-workers. Now it is "with the wheel chair ramp." Love is the most important thing. The ramp allows them to be as independent as possible. I am all for them to being independent and I support it in any way I can. My mother is still quite capable of driving. She does a beautiful job of it. Lately however, she needs a cushion to sit on otherwise she barely can see above the dash. She gets dad out of the house for a ride when she can. He does not remember houses or towns anymore. But he does love to see the cows, horses and other farm animals. We grew up on a farm and there is something soothing about it for him. He loves cows and so do I. It just does not seem right to have a landscape without dairy cows dotting the horizon.

I had another sister that took all my mothers recipes and make several notebooks. She did such a wonderful job! One for deserts, meats and dairy. It is in plastic sheets in a three ring binder. We try to organize as much as possible for her. The pictures mom has gone through and given back to each of us kids to have now while she remembers what she does.

And we have put our names on things we have given her, that will be returned to us. This is the only fair way of handing things. You will always have those that will squabble, so this diminishes any chances of that happening. My mother went to make a torte recipe. She was upset and tired. I had to help her figure out how to use the new mixer, and walk her through the ingredients. (Mom was putting old beaters on the new mixer. I took them off and put the new beaters more square on the new mixer. Then it worked). I stood there and helped with adding all of them in, and helping her with each step. This is different but manageable. Mom took all the credit for the desert which came out great. Remember it is not about us, it is about them. They get all the support and credit. We help make that happen for them.

I went to gas up my mom's car for her the other night. Coming home a hot air balloon was in the neighborhood. I told mom to come out and look at it. It landed in our yard, so she got dad out on the porch to look at it. It didn't really mean anything to him, but mom was all excited! That just made her day; it was all she could talk about. She even called her best friend up with the news. These little surprises life throws our way are gems that we can all enjoy and hold onto.

I myself have a disability, a bad back and arthritis. I have great difficulty getting around. It is 6:55am. I heard this banging so I went upstairs. As in time past I thought my dad fell or my mom and was trying to get my attention. Mom was in the kitchen with a

rolling pin banging out a bag of ice for her leg. The ice cubes were too sharp in it. I told her I thought someone had fallen. She said no smiling at me. I told her I was going back to bed. She thought it was funny I woke up so early and went upstairs. I suppose if I were her I would think the same, but right now I don't think it's funny. It is little moments like this mom does enjoy. I am not quite sure why but she was smiling. With my cat winding around my feet I suppose I could go upstairs and make my coffee. Next month autumn will be here. And with it the challenges of cold weather and transportation to and from places. I love the falling of the leaves. It reflects well this phase of life that all three of us are in.

Mom the other day was not sure if she had her driving glasses on or her regular glasses. So I had to check them out. Then the other day she stuck dad's reading glasses on him because his bifocals the bow was broke and needed a new screw. My sister asked why did she stick the wrong glasses on him and mother said because he needed something on his face. Now I'm really loving the reasoning behind things. I know which are which now. It is sad when they both put them on and can't see any difference. Oh Heavens!

Dad the other day left the kitchen table to go to the bedroom. Mom went after him to see if he needed assistance. He was screaming where was his checkbook. He was looking in the bathroom. Mom had to show him it was in his office not the bathroom. These things are not funny yet they are. You have to

laugh at them to lighten up the mood. Then two nights ago mom found the cellar door locked and the kitchen light was on. He got up in the middle of the night to make sure the house was locked. He locked my door from the cellar to upstairs. We had to reverse the door, so I could lock it from the cellar. We are worried he would try to go downstairs and he would fall. This way I lock him out and don't have to worry about his falling down the cellar stairs. I find that as the days goes by there is always something new you have to adapt to or contend with. My brother in law did a beautiful job with the door lock. He is just awesome with things! We are blessed to have him around.

We have found out that mom has arthritis in her jaw. This is contributing to her deafness. Today she goes back to the doctor for more diagnosis and tests. Myself I just got an application for a handicap car placard. With my own arthritis and other conditions it is greatly needed. We have all learned to become part of a tag team. We synchronize our schedules to each other, making sure of ample coverage for the folks. It is just my sister, her husband and me. My other brother in law comes to play cards. I do not know how other families deal with it. They often have no choice with the skyrocketing price for elder care and for nursing homes. Growing up the kids and grandparents all lived together, so there was always coverage. Today, with job travels, relocating and the selfishness of most people they leave their elderly to fend for themselves. I find this most

shameful in this country. The Orientals take better care of their own. I think that is why the Chinese are so loved in America. Besides, they have wonderful food! I love Chinese!

It has been a while since I have written last. Time is just flowing by, with doctor's appointments, errands and events. Mom lately is repeating herself more than usual. I am okay with it. I am relishing the moments. She had the simple pleasure of my sister and her going shopping. She bought some little saucer plates she thought pretty. Today she got out a small crackle ware pitcher, washed it so she could see how beautiful it was. She saw a larger one at the doctor's office so she came home and did that. It was neat to see her pick things up, go through them with pleasure. Dad is sleeping more, tired more often. It is a concern to us but considering his age, this is all in good stride. I often wake in the middle of the night, writing down poems and thoughts that came to me from the day. That is my special hour, when I can read with the house so quiet. It is a time when I can reflect after the troubles of the day at hand. I can put them to rest, and relax for another day accomplished. I got my own handicap placard in the mail today. Now I am one of them! (Funny how that happens). Life just comes and transition also. I use to keep on top of everything with everyone in the day. Now I choose what I want to hear and am content with living in my own definition. It is such a release to let go of all the extra baggage of others and just concentrate on ones self.

I have just had the privilege of having one of

Dad's old friends; he, his wife and son stop by. They were married on the same day as my parents; he was a WWII vet and was wearing his purple heart. He also is an author! He gave me a copy of his book, and he is writing a 3rd! He is 88 years old and they both are alert and spry. His son was wonderful also! He remembered me and all the earlier years when we were all so involved in church events. This is the second week in a row that older people have stopped by to say hello to my dad and get re-acquainted with him and mom. Days like today are gems in ones week. Truly we had such a lovely visit. I will end this entry on that note.

I thought it was the end to a perfect day but life strikes again. I decided to go up after everyone went to bed to take a shower. I get someone knocking on the door. I yell, "What"? And they just keep knocking. Well with soap in my hair I turn the shower off, drape a towel over my frame and crack open the door. It is my dad standing there in his shorts. My mother is screaming to him for he has no hearing aide in that I am in the bathroom taking a shower. He did not see me so I quickly shut the door and resumed my shower. When I get done I hear my mom asking for me. I yell again, "What"? I get out and she says to dad who is still there, "see, that is her in the bathroom". Well mom got dad back in bed. It seems that he thought he saw and heard someone go in the bedroom and he wanted to see who it was. It either was an angel or a ghost, or a spirit of some kind, but it was most emphatically not me. I went down cellar

and locked the door. I did not want him to get up in the night, and try to come down cellar so it is all locked on him. Now that the lock is from the cellar he can no longer lock me down here from up there. I can come and go from this side. Good thinking to have the lock reversed. I think most who deal with people with dementia are experiencing things they thought they would never see or hear. It only seems to get crazier as the days go by. (Much patience and prayers is needed by all who walk this walk). Some are better than others. And with that, a good night to all.

Today we were blessed with the perfect day. It was in the high 50's which is nothing to sneeze at. I am enjoying the turn to autumn weather. Mom made pot roast. However she took out some small carrots and had them on the stove earlier. I thought nothing of it. After the meal I told her about it. She said she thought they were small sausages, so she didn't give them to dad. She could not tell in a sauce pan in front of her. She said her eyesight is getting bad, not what it use to be. Now I knew that but this is frightening. However she still manages to drive so I take my hat off to her. I just will check what she makes or serves me first the next time. We had the hot air balloon in our neighborhood again. It went and landed in my neighbors cow pasture then dipped back up. It proceeded to fly over our house. At the same time a two winged single engine airplane flew overhead, circled the hot air balloon then went on in the other direction. I miss the Brrrr of the engine. It is a lost art, but when I hear one it is music to my ears. I got

mom back out on the front porch again to see the balloon. My trip was a success. I purchased \$5.00 of lottery tickets to be the next millionaire, and a gallon of chocolate ice cream. With those two things done I do feel much better. If only life could be so easy. (I didn't win the megabucks. Oh shock of shocks!)

When I use to work my coworkers were all a little older than me. It was useful to hear their own personal struggles with family and parental elder care. Several took time off to help out the other siblings. Many lost their parents while I worked with them. That was really a blessing to me, to give me the patience and insight of their examples to draw from. My friend Alice, her mom always had a nightcap every night before she went to bed. I thought that remarkable a woman in her age to continue to do so. And even Beth, her dad always had a beer. To me that says a lot. It tells me they were sharp to the end, they appreciated life and the journey. They had no regrets and loved their family. To all those wonderful people, I salute my glass to you. I felt like a member of the family as we all shared our strengths and sorrows with each other. Mostly we learned to go through the daily grind together. I do miss my old coworkers, and this paragraph is a tribute to them and all the wonderful times we shared together. Thank you Alice, Beth, Polly!

Today mom was coming home from giving dad a ride, honked the horn as usual for me to get dad out of the car. Dad in his confusion turned his walker around and sat on the seat. He couldn't hear me so I

had no choice but to push him up the wheelchair ramp in his walker. Now he is heavy and I appreciate all the more what care attendants do for others. It did put my back out some. I am not 20 anymore, not even 30 by a long shot. My body is screaming that to me, my mind is flattering me with denial that I can still cut it. I think the body is winning this time. I theorized why Dad did that. He goes to church with Kitty and Brian. They push him up the ramp in his wheelchair. He saw the ramp and I think got confused and wanted me to push him up it. So I think that is what happened.

You really don't realize how fast a stretch of time does go by. Everyday I feel much busier than the day before. Mom's legs keep swelling on her. It is her heart and she needs to put them up, rest more. I got to make Dad lunch and whatnot. Well my cat is just crazy about my dad. It is male so go figure. Today the cat was in the way so dad just ran over the cat with his walker, over his stomach. Now the cat is so dumb and trusting, no matter how much dad mistreats him he just goes back for more. The cat really loves my dad. I just think across the animal species, all men like to stick together regardless. That is the only logical explanation I can think of. My schedule now is so wrapped around theirs that it is one and the same. I find myself making more meals around the house. Now that is scary because I can bake, but cooking is pushing it. I can but I am rather lazy. I have learned to LOVE Rummy 500 the card game. And I have learned to love listening to them repeat themselves many times over. It is part of the patience and

humility that comes with care giving. One day I will be there and I hope that I can step up to the plate the way that I am meant to. Hopefully in turn there will be someone there for me when it is my turn. We can only hope.

Mom stepped on something on the floor, couldn't figure out what it was. Dad had hotdogs for lunch. He chewed up the skins and spit them in the waste basket. He missed. Yup, we found out what it was! Never a dull moment. Much time has lapsed since I have written. It seems I have become one in the same with their routine, that I have lost respect of time. Months have gone by, so has spring, summer, fall and now winter is here. I have been watching my parents daily change as they age yet more gracefully. What use to bother me much now I can laugh with them through it. I have surrendered and gained peace in the process.

Some little things that are funny, that I try to keep track of. My father went for a ride with my mother. He put on his sunglasses that wrap around, and they went on a long ride. My mother came back so excited she took him and he enjoyed himself. Walking in he still had the sunglasses on. Removing I did discover that he took off his eye glasses to wear the sun glasses. Hence he never saw a thing my mother jubilantly pointed out to him the hour long ride. Another time she went to take him for a ride. He said he was going to stick her in the back seat. She said, "And who would drive?" where he replied, "Me". Mom laughed so hard she peed her pants laughing. These

are the light hearted moments that we are enjoying. Bladder control is another whole issue that we are dealing with.

Dad usually gets himself up in the morning and mom just goes along with it. This morning was different. She said something told her to check his bathroom. He went to flush it and it almost overflowed. She had to plunge it. It had already overflowed once cascading down into my closet, which I had to clean out. (My clothes were spared). It is never a dull moment around here. Today is actually Thanksgiving Day. Everyone upstairs is napping resting up for the event. Kitty my baby sister really is such a good sport. We are all going down there this afternoon. I bought her some chocolate to bring over. What little I can do I enjoy doing. I find it most different not working or earning money because I am disabled. I have been for yet more tests from various doctors. I have learned to be grateful for what I have. I also shop exclusively at thrift shops, and get freebies at the dump. People get rid of perfectly good items in this country for which I can always use. I have watched some good shows on TV today. Yet I am dismayed at the wicked commercialism which has replaced the meaning of this day, and the greed of never being satisfied, always wanting more. It never was like that growing up.

Being raised on a farm with a very large family, we did recycling before it was "new". We stretched everything we had, from clothes as hand me downs to my brothers ice skates. We even had to share a

bicycle which actually was my dad's. We each learned to take turns riding it and respecting his property and returning it back in its place. I feel that at least two generations have been removed from my dad. Since WWII people seem to have no wants and take everything for granted. Yet I see now the economy of the world headed back into dire straights, far worse than my dad's time. I see where we will learn again the value of items, but value of family should be more. Either people learn to have a heart or they do not. Most kids today have never prayed or know of any spirituality to define as their own. They are living blindly life as it comes. And I feel sorry they do not have that inner peace and strength which makes such a difference. As was said, erode the family and the nation will soon follow. And this I am seeing unravel before my eyes as an epidemic across the globe.

Without gratitude people can never be happy, for they have not learned to be content in all things, with little or with much. I wish these things were taught in schools today but they are not. These values are dying with the older generations of long ago. To live in a society that has no God or Values is a dangerous thing. Nationalism cannot replace spirituality. WWII has proven that and all that did died failing. What do we have if we stop teaching our children? They will grow up to take care of us. How will we be treated if they don't value us or what we have lived for? Reflection helps but it must be implemented as a way of life, so that we can guarantee against moral decline and devastation of future generations. There is much

on media today; it bombards us 24/7. We have to get away from that and be still and know our God, and be strengthened in Him for what is coming our way. For life is not for the weak, but the strong. And my parents are an example of this.

Mom just yelled to me so I ran upstairs. You would have thought the house was on fire. Dad got up and decided to close the magnetic mini blinds. He pulled them off the door. So laughing I hung them back up, and handed Dad back his walker that he misplaced. Always something. The carpenter was suppose to come today to replace the shingles on the roof where it meets the garage. No show, no carpenter, no phone call. Like I said, you got to love it. A small chickadee hit the window earlier really hard. I stepped outside and picked it up in my leather gloves. I tucked it away in the dogwood bushes for it to recover. I went to feed the birds later and checked in on him. He got well enough and flew away. I like happy endings. Mom and I were watching a video of Dad's 75th birthday party. A lot of people on there are now dead, one of them my younger brother. It is amazing to see how time flies and fashions change. I am signing off for now. Must keep my ears peeled and check in on the folks.

Dad has changed how he plays Rummy 500. It use to be deal seven cards, pick one up, put one down. Dad will take from the pile what he wants, leave the rest not take them. Then he will pick up one or two more times from the deck till he gets the cards he needs to get out. You just have to let him do what he wants. If I have three of a kind, he tells me he wants

my cards for points on my side. I just add them in for him. At his age and confusion, I have learned when I correct him he gets angry and confused. Don't rock the boat. Let him "cheat" as he does when he thinks he is doing so well. Other times he is his old self and nothing wrong. It is for sure the mini seizures in his brain. All in all he does very well with staying active. We do search the word puzzles and then we put videos in of little animals. He watches those. I think they remind him of the farm growing up. That is something where mom and dad can sit together on the couch. Mom can't drive now because the sunlight bothers her eyes, and her arm hurts her. She will need cataract surgery. After that I think she will do much better with glare. Another day winds down. And for that I am grateful. Glad to have my parents one more day, more events to add to the loving memories. I hope my daily saga helps someone else out there who is also a caretaker. Know that you are not alone, and humor and prayer works wonders. These are our tools, without them we are nothing.