

# *More Stories!*

**Forum**

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## Passing

by RA Naegele

It is a time of remembrance when one of our parents passes on. It is a time to remember all the pleasant memories that fill our hearts, and to remember special moments we shared with mom and dad over the years.

I was inspired to share my thoughts by a post on the "Clipper's Busy Corner" forum, by one of our valued and respected members. My friend made a statement that "the hardest thing for children with parents, is burying them."

That statement struck my heart and sent me into deep reflection on the rewards reaped from my own parents, and my responsibility to them in their old age.

I presently have my mother's ashes on my dresser. She and my dad had decided years ago that they would like to be cremated. They also made a pact that they would want to be buried together, and not be put in the cold ground alone.

Mom and dad would have been married 59 years, if my mom had lived until spring of 2005. She passed on in October of 2004. My mom and dad were not only husband and wife, they were best friends. They were happy spending their every waking hour together, especially in their retirement years.

I had moved here to Tennessee to care for my mom

and dad when I retired . They were reaching an age where they could no longer maintain their home and lawn. I was lucky to come here when I did, as I had the enjoyment of spending two years with them, doing things to make them happy, before my mom passed away in 2004.

There were many times over the years when I would thank them for something that they did for me while I was growing up. They would simply say, "your time is coming," and "you will get your chance to take care of us when we are old." They said those things jokingly as a threat, but I took them as a serious responsibility and looked forward to the day that I could make it up to them for the troubled and sleepless nights that I had caused them over the years. They had stuck by me when I was an actively drinking alcoholic, and didn't even like myself. They loved me when I came back home to live when my first marriage broke up.

Parents love us unconditionally, and that is what we need to do for them. They make great sacrifices to raise us and give us what we need to thrive. When they are elderly and start to need more than they can give, it is our turn to begin to reciprocate.

My fondest memories of my mom are not only of the childhood years, but of the last two years of her life. We spent our every waking hour taking care of my parents and their house and lawn. We took them everywhere with us. she lived about 2 miles up the road from here, and whenever we were going anywhere, even shopping, they would ride along. They loved to ride, and sometimes did nothing more than sit in the car while we shopped, and "people watched" as they called it.

Mom and dad had friends across the street that came over for coffee every Wednesday evening. Kathy would always bake something sweet, such as a cake, pie, or brownies, and I would take it up to them, so they could have a treat with their coffee. It was the highlight of their week, to chat with these friends, and watch some special TV program together.

We either took them out to eat, had them here to eat with us, or Kathy made enough for me to take them supper at their house at least 3 times a week. We took them back to NY state to see their surviving relatives and friends one more time, and took them to the Carolinas to see elderly friends that were no longer capable of driving the 300 miles to Tennessee to visit.

Mom's favorite treat was when I would get up

early, and get Krispy Kreme glazed donuts, and sneak quietly into their house and leave the donuts and their newspaper on their kitchen table.

My dad has essential tremor, which is much like parkinson's disease, except it is not life threatening. His hands tremble so badly that he can no longer feed himself. He loves to go out to eat, and for what little it cost to go to a buffet restaurant and feed him his favorite dishes, was little enough to pay for all the meals he has provided for me while I was growing up.

Mom had lost a kidney when she was young (sometime in the 50's). She lived the rest of her 79 years with no further problems with the remaining kidney. After suffering from an irregular heartbeat, they decided to shock her heart back into normal rhythm with a defibrillator. When they shocked her heart, she threw a blood clot from somewhere in her body and it went to the kidney and blocked the blood supply to the kidney, causing kidney failure. Her body didn't tolerate dialysis well, and she ended up in our local hospital for 2 1/2 months before she passed away.

One of the side effects of the uremia was dementia and hallucinations. She would awaken every morning terrified, and not knowing where she was, imagining that horrible things had taken place. I went to the hospital every morning for the 2 1/2 months, and would be there when she woke up, so she would not be afraid and confused. I would feed her breakfast and go with her downstairs to the dialysis clinic on her treatment days. After I settled her into the dialysis clinic, I would leave and go to their house and fix my dad's oatmeal and feed him his breakfast. By then it would be time to go back to the hospital and feed mom her lunch, get something to eat myself, and then return to their house and feed dad lunch. I would then take dad to the hospital to see mom, stay until 5 PM to feed mom her supper, and then feed dad, either at our house or take him out to eat. When he was safely settled back at their house, I would go back to the hospital and sit with mom until either my brother or my sister came to visit, so she would not be alone and afraid. Having a family member by her bedside seemed to be the only thing that anchored her to any semblance of peace and reality.

I went to feed dad breakfast one morning, and he was on the bathroom floor. He had simply fallen over from grief and stress, and was hospitalized for the last month of mom's life. He was on one floor and she was on another. The nurses and I would dress dad in his street clothes every afternoon, and

take him in his wheel chair, down to see mom, so she would not know that dad was in the hospital too. Then we would take him back, put him back in his pajamas, and put him back in bed. Mom lived another month, never knowing or having to worry because dad was hospitalized.

Mom had fallen from her bed, trying to get up during the night, and had to have brain surgery to remove a large blood clot that formed from hitting her head. Between the brain surgery and the dialysis, she was simply clinging to life because she was worried about what would happen to my father without her. My brother, sister, and myself, explained the situation to dad, and talked to the palliative care folks. The lady from palliative care and hospice then went with me to mom's room the next morning, and I assured mom that I would take dad into our home, and that she would not have to worry about his wellbeing. We then explained to her, that she had the option of discontinuing her treatment and medications, and moving to the hospice house, where she would pass away painlessly and peacefully within a few days. That is what she opted for, and she was moved that same evening. She was placed on a morphine drip, and 36 hours later, she passed peacefully and without further agony or pain. Sitting at her bedside for those 36 hours with my brother and sister, was the hardest 36 hours of my life. Watching your mother slowly shut down and drift away, no matter how painless it is for her, is a heart wrenching experience.

Dad came to live with Kathy and I, and we sold their house, straightened out all their financial affairs, and went about fulfilling our promises to my mother. We went and bought a beautiful double headstone, a double plot, wide enough for a large foundation for the stone. The stone has a single base with two individual stones with their individual dates and personal information on them, and sitting between those two stones is a separate stone with two interlocking wedding rings and the date of their marriage engraved upon it. We then went and prepaid and planned dad's funeral, so he could have the satisfaction of knowing his wishes were known and taken care of. When dad passes away, their final wish is to have their ashes placed side by side in the grave.

My dad lived with us until he no longer could get around, and we could no longer able to properly care for him. We searched for a clean and comfortable nursing home, and he is very happy there, contented with his books and television, as he was here at our house. He is content, loves the girls

that care for him, and they all love him, as he is a very amiable and easy going person.

My dad has always been my hero, and my role model. He was the most caring and gentle dad anyone would ever envision. I cherish every moment I spend with him now. I never know when I will get that call from the nursing home, telling me that he went to sleep and didn't wake up. He is 84, and has congestive heart failure, and diabetes. The last words when I leave his room are always "I love you dad!" His answer is always "I love you too, number one son!"

My life has been one of ups and downs, of successes as well as failures. I have three wonderful sons that have grown into fine and respectable young men. Now it is their turn to be fathers and to prepare their own children for life.

I was not always a good father, but I hope that when I have passed on, my boys will have forgiven my transgressions and will keep my memory in that special place in their hearts where I keep my memories of my parents.

I compare us to dry cell batteries. When we are young, we start out with a fresh charge and plenty of energy. As we age, our power wanes and we grow less and less active, until the day comes that our charge is used up, and we pass on.

In the mean time, I cherish my time with my dad, and am content to know that when his days are done here on earth, he will be going to a special place and will be reunited with my mom to spend eternity together.

For now, mom rests on my dresser, and I often speak to her in spirit. She still seems to guide me occasionally or console me when my day isn't what I might want it to be.

I have been enlightened by the responsibility to care for mom and dad. My advice to all, is don't take that responsibility as a "drudgery or a burden". Take it as an opportunity to "enjoy" your parents. Don't simply "allocate time" to be with them as a necessity. Instead, spend your happy time with them, and arrange your other worldly tasks around that time. Always remember that when you were little, YOUR needs were THEIR priority, and that is a privilege that benefits both them and you in their old age. Make them a priority, and enjoy every minute you spend with them. You will find yourself basking in the warmth of their love, just as you did as a child. You will find a feeling of satisfaction

that is like no other. Enjoy their waning years and you will have a heart full of memories and a mind that is free of guilt. Caring for mom and dad, and spending "quality" time with them in their old age is a wonderful experience. It is a gift from God and not a burden placed upon us. Embrace that opportunity and learning experience. Ask those questions that you will not be able to find answers to when your parents are gone. Parents are a true gift from God, equaled only by our children.

The last six years, since my retirement and my moving here to care for mom and dad, have been some of the happiest years of my life, and have contained some of the most joyous moments shared with my parents.

Celebrate life with them, and you won't have to grieve when they are gone. You will be content, knowing that they left this world happy, and have gone to a better place, where we will all be reunited some day.

God bless the moms and dads, and bring peace to those that are departed.

I hope in relating these stories, some of you will gain a newfound appreciation for the parents that we sometimes tend to take for granted. Be aware that their time on this earth is limited. Never go to bed mad, and never leave the presence of a friend or loved one without telling them you love them. God bless you all!

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See RA Naegele's blog at:

<http://alongthebanksofbeavercreek.blogspot.com/>



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