

## **Testimony of a male caregiver who cared for his wife with Alzheimer's disease.**

(The questions are in black. The caregiver's responses are in dark blue.)

### **1. How long have you been caring for your wife?**

I have been providing care for approximately 2 years. She did not need a lot of help at home. She had some difficulty getting out of the chair. I had to get a potty chair for the house. The potty chair worked out real well. Even 2 years ago she was able to do a little cooking, although a lot of it was microwave cooking. We got along OK.

### **2. What precipitated your move to a continuous care community?**

Well, I had no intention of moving into a facility. However, I had a new snow blower and when the first heavy snow came, I went out to move snow around and hurt my back. I went for 20 plus weeks of therapy. I knew I could not go on like this. So we talked about it. We sold our house and bought a patio home with 2 bedrooms and a sunroom. We knew about the home because her mom stayed here for a while.

### **3. Was it a tough decision to make the move into a facility?**

Yes, I decided not to have surgery on my herniated disk. I am 88 years old. I will just have to suffer through it. I had surgery on my forehead that required 10.5 hours. The surgeon just kept cutting and cutting. I am sure that will shorten my life span. I have no feeling on the right side of my forehead. I just keep plugging away, day by day.

### **4. Do you think your back trouble affected your care to your wife?**

Not too much. Approximately 1 ½ years ago the girls came to the house and gave her therapy. So I brought her over to the nursing home where she received a lot of therapy. After 26 weeks of therapy, I took her home and she was in worse shape than when she came in. People from therapy could not believe it. She was better before therapy than after therapy.

### **5. How does her health affect your health?**

I don't think it affects me. I get tired. I am over here 7 hours a day. My main concern is my forehead. My general health, I don't think her health bothers me that much.

### **6. What stress was involved in the decision to move her into a long term care facility?**

It was not easy. I probably felt worse than she did. You know- after you have been married for 66 years and I am here and she is over here, it is not easy. But I know she is getting good care here.

**7. You said you know she is getting good care here. What brings you here 7 hours per day?**

Well she seems more relaxed when I am here. Although she seems half asleep. She just seems more relaxed when she hears my voice. I talk to her. The girls say that at 8 or 8:30 when they are getting her ready for bed she asks for me. There are other things I could be doing at home but if I am there or here for 6 hours or 7 hours, what difference does it make?

**8. Have you used any other resources at home?**

Therapy girls came in and helped. A young lady came in every week or two to help clean house.

**9. How did you keep track of medication?**

Medication – No problem, I have been doing it for years and years. She had a 7-day planner and I have her pills lined up every day. Never missed a one, I took care of eye drops. I took care of everything.

**10. What did she do when you had an appointment?**

She went one time that was it. When I had forehead surgery and was gone for 10-12 hours, the cleaning lady took off work and stayed with her. The rest of the time, I stayed with her. I might run up to the IGA for an hour or hour and one half but never longer. The rest of the time I was right there with her.

**11. Any family able to assist you?**

No – not without taking off work

**12. Did you develop any unique strategies to get through each day?**

No nothing special. I plan ahead for dentist or other appointments when she had to be at home alone. Now that she is here (the nursing home), I don't have to plan ahead and do not need to worry.

**13. Do you still worry?**

Sure, you never know.

**14. Do you think the worrying has affected your health?**

That I really don't know. I feel just the same. My blood pressure and appetite are still good.

**15. Anything else you would like to tell us?**

Hospice nurse comes in twice per week. Goal is to keep her comfortable as much as we can. That is all we can do. She has a blood clot in her left leg. Hopefully they take care of the clot all the time.

**16. Was decision to involve hospice in her care a difficult decision?**

Yes, it was but you never know. I just turned 88 and she is 90. Somethings you just cannot help.

**17. Do you have financial concerns?**

Plenty

**18. Do you have someone helping with your finances?**

One of the girls from the office at the nursing home is helping.

**Addendum**

The husband found these resources most helpful:

1. Home care – equipment
2. Housekeeping
3. Financial
4. Therapy – Physical, Occupational, and Speech
5. Facilities – Independent, Assisted Living, Skilled, Intermediate and Dementia Care
6. Hospice