

Author - John Sweeney

My Heartbreaking Journey with Alzheimer's – A Caregiver's Lament

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At my 80th birthday party, with the family gathering in fall of 2009,
Family noticed Virginia's memory problem they couldn't define,
Our daughters had made observations that they brought to my attention,
Concluded that Mom had memory issues, they were reticent to mention,
Things for which I was very unaware, because of my closeness to her,
I had missed many of the little indicators that would frequently occur,
But the family had seen the signs, to them they were in plain view,
After that I started to watch, sadly as I came to see them too,
Signs of forgetfulness seem to display more often than before,
Observations, painful to me, seem to be recurring more and more,
One painful example, she urgently called to my attention one day,
Her husband would be at the airport soon, we needed to be underway,
She needed to go to the bathroom while at a family affair,
"That young gal here is going to take me and show me where",
It was a granddaughter that she loved so much in days of yore,

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So very painfully sad that my love didn't know her anymore,
Our daughters had come to visit with us at our apartment one day,
She called me aside whispering to me, sadly I heard her say,
"Who are those two ladies we were talking with out there?"
Fear shook through my frame as I became very much aware,
Slowly realizing I was losing the woman I had loved over 60 years,
This terrible disease, Alzheimer's, was filling me with many fears,
It seemed now was time to explore with specialist in neurology,
At what point in this heartbreaking path now do we seem to be,
He set up an appointment with Neuro technicians for a brain scan,
From there he would have what was needed for a treatment plan,
With an aviator's style head gear with contacts and wires everywhere,
It looked like a swim cap, the kind that Esther Williams used to wear,
The diagnosis stung when the description of the problem was read,
And I was shockingly informed with news that I had come to dread,
Alzheimer's was the diagnosis, more news that hurt to the core,

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For I had read many of the outcomes of this terrible disease before,
My mind raced, thoughts buzzed violently in my aged head,
As I contemplated what sorrow, pain and anxieties lay ahead,
As time passed, terrible anxieties burdened the love of my life,
It pained me greatly to see the stress in her, my beloved wife,
“We need to call my parents or grandmother so they hear from me!”
Her parents passed in the 1940s and her grandmother in 1953,
She would panic, searching, the “baby” was nowhere in sight,
A horrible feeling, sobbing kept awake in the middle of the night,
It soon became apparent, caring for her was beyond my ability,
Painfully searching, at this point what could the answer be,
After counsel with all the family, we all soon became aware,
The best solution for her well being was a room in Memory Care,
As I filled out the application, with my eyes filled with tears,
I realized we would be separated for the first time in 70 years,
She moved to memory care in the month of January 2019,

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More evidence of cognitive regression was gradually seen,
One of the most painful experiences not noticed before,
That most of the time, she doesn't know who I am anymore,
But with everything we have lost, and how our lives are stressed,
I remember fondly my 70 years with her, I have been blessed.

***By John Sweeney - John lives in an Independent Living apartment in Cherrywood
Pointe of Roseville, MN. His wife Virginia is in Memory Care in the same
facility.***