

Foreword

Dear Reader,

A word about who I am and why I'm writing this book:

I am an early Baby-boomer, not yet retired, administrator for non-profit organizations who present musical programs in northern New Hampshire. I am a former public school music teacher, following in my father's career path. In a second marriage, my husband and I have a blended family of six grown children. We have had plans for many years to pursue our interest in traveling.

Just as this new stage in our lives was about to open up for us, my parents, who at that point were in their early 90's and going strong, started to show signs of declining health. Fortunately, it was not a mental decline, but the result of some physical health issues including TIA's (sometimes called 'mini-strokes') that made us aware a change needed to take place to keep them safe and in the best possible space, which meant not on their own, 1300-1500 miles away from their daughters.

At the same time, my only sibling, an older sister, who had recently lost her husband to a 4-year battle of cancer, was herself, diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer, and ended her earthly journey in August of the first summer my parents agreed to stay permanently in their New Hampshire summer home. This home, a condo, is located across the street and around the corner from the home my husband and I built several years ago. Because my original family was small, just my parents, my sister and me, it became my responsibility to provide the moral support my parents needed to make some very difficult decisions.

In addition to my love of music and education, I have a strong sense of responsibility along with good organizational skills and a lot of attention to detail. I also enjoy working at my computer and find myself 'researching' answers to questions that arise daily, everything from a good recipe for onion soup to how to tell my father he can't drive any longer! I have found that there are many helpful answers that come from using the 'search engines' as well as some pretty scary and inaccurate ones that are really no help at all. Sometimes it is difficult to know the difference.

So here I was, enjoying life with my husband, watching our six adult kids and our nine grandkids on their life-journeys, both of us in good health, and looking forward to the flexibility to travel and just 'do what we want' when I suddenly found myself responsible for the care of my parents. Having them live in our home was never an option, but having them close enough to check on and "put eyes on" daily was a real advantage in the type of care they could receive.

This all gave new meaning to the phrase: "Life is what happens while you're busy making other plans!"

I suddenly had a lot of learning to do: how to interview and hire people to work closely with my parents in their home, how to manage a payroll complete with employment benefits and taxes, how to become a good health care advocate for them as they required increased visits with doctors, and most of all, how to work through a lot of challenges in my personal relationships with my mom and dad, not to mention my husband, children and grandchildren.

As I found myself having conversations with friends about my new responsibilities, I realized I was not only in uncharted waters, personally, but my friends were responding with surprise at the many things I had to learn. When I would tell a funny or sad story about my parents' current status or recount some new piece of information I had acquired, and found that it was new to my listeners as well, I would laugh and say "well, I think I'll write a book."

I had kept a diary of many of my parents' incidents such as doctor's appointments and major health issues, just for the sake of accuracy for doctors and

even for my parents as they tried to remember how they got to the place they were in. So, much of the information in this book was already saved in note form, and after my dad died, at age 97, with almost 4 years of in-home care behind us, and with my mom still 'going strong' waiting to celebrate her 100th birthday in the summer, I felt like it was time for me to put my thoughts on paper.

Maybe you will find it interesting just to experience a slice of life in the end-of-life journey we all face, or maybe you have relatives who are about to enter that space, or perhaps you want to get your thoughts and expectations in order for your own care. Whatever your reason for reading this story, it is my wish that you will find something—even one nugget of information that will help you as you continue down the road of Life.

Thanks for reading *The Golden Daze*.

