

CAREGIVERS

Each family's caregiving story is unique with a common thread: The desire to care. We thank these families for sharing their stories so that others can learn from them.

share their EXPERIENCES

GENE'S STORY

Kids say the darndest things

By Gene Nowak

My grandmother likes to tell a story about me from when I was four or five years old. She says that I approached her and announced that I would one day drive a sports car. Then she asked if I would take her for a ride. Cleverly, I answered no, and patiently explained to her that I'd push her around in her wheelchair instead. Unknown to me, she wasn't impressed with my somewhat thoughtless pronouncement—she was only in her mid 40s at the time!

I think she continues to bring up this story because it always makes me blush.

Last winter, I went away for a weekend ski holiday. Wouldn't you know, on my first run down the mountain I hit a patch of ice, lost control of my skis and took a nasty fall: A broken right ankle, broken ribs and concussion put me in the local hospital. On my third day there, my mother took me for a spin down the hospital corridors in a bor-

rowed wheelchair. She said there was a surprise waiting for me, but we had to go outside for me to see it. When we got to the door, there was Grandma, standing beside a cherry-red Ford Mustang. "Wanna go for a ride?" she asked with a wicked smile. ☀️



MRS. PHILLIPS' STORY

Time out

By Cheryl Yin

I met Mrs. Phillips a couple of months ago when she moved into our residence. I am a volunteer here, and one of my responsibilities is to help newcomers make the transition into our home. Each new person who comes through the front door is unique, and I never know how easy or difficult it will be to get them settled. In Mrs. Phillips's case, that part was easy. She is

extremely outgoing, and within the first few hours of her arrival she had already charmed all of the staff and made friends. Now, whenever I see her, she always has a smile on her face and is never at a loss for words! So when I found her alone, uncharacteristically silent and agitated in the television lounge, I was a little taken aback.

It turned out that her daughter Anna was late for her weekly visit. Without fail, she'd been visiting her mother every Sunday at 3pm—sharp. According to the clock on the wall, the time was now 3:34pm. "What if something's happened to her?" Mrs. Phillip's

sobbed, "What if she's forgotten?" I promised to call her daughter, and hurried to the office. After the second ring, Anna picked up. "No," she said, "I'm not running late and I'll be there as usual—on time." I glanced at the office computer's screen—it read 2:39pm. And then it hit me: The time change! Spring forward and fall back! There's always an explanation! Maintenance had forgotten to change the clock in the lounge. I sprinted back to Mrs. Phillips. After my explanation, she not only relaxed, she chuckled. Thankfully, she was smiling again when her daughter arrived. ☀️



Seeds of hope

By Erna Jacobson



I grew up on a farm. My father farmed the same land that his grandfather had farmed after he'd emigrated from Greece. My mother died when I was young and dad never remarried. He kept working the land until a heart attack and quadruple bypass surgery forced him to retire.

With nobody to take care of dad on the farm, my husband and I invited him to stay with us. Dad hates the city and

grumbled about it endlessly—until he began a bunch of small housekeeping projects and decided to plant a vegetable garden in our backyard. Sadly for all of us, and before his garden had begun to do much more than sprout, he suffered a stroke. He lost feeling in his left side and lost the ability to speak.

Dad stayed in the hospital for weeks and then went to rehab. I took time off from work so I could be by his side. One day my husband and I were showing him some photos when he suddenly reached for one of the pictures with his good hand. It was a snapshot of his garden. Dad studied it with a contented smile. My husband clued in, and now we take a picture of the garden every few days, print it and take to Dad so he can monitor its progress. ☀️

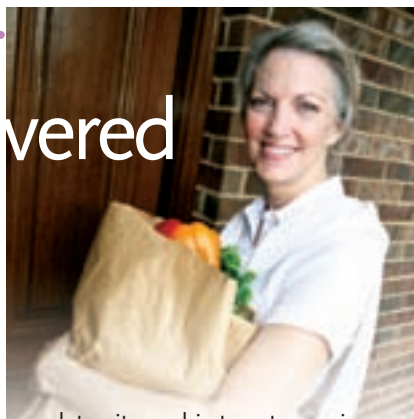
GEORGE'S STORY

Inspiration delivered

By Tara Rankin

If a picture were needed for an encyclopedia article on “active seniors,” my grandfather George and his wife Vivian would have been in it. They traveled often, always seeking out new adventures. And when they were at home they were extremely active in the community, participating on multiple boards and taskforces on seniors' issues. One thing that my grandfather felt strongly about was volunteering for Meals on Wheels. Each week, for more than a decade, he delivered meals to needy seniors. The funny thing is, many of the people he would take meals to were actually much younger than him!

When grandpa became frail a few



years later, it was his turn to receive Meals on Wheels. One day, when Vivian was away visiting her grandchildren, grandpa received a knock at the door. Lo and behold—when he answered the door, he was met by a friendly Meals on Wheels volunteer named Mary. It turned out that Mary was the daughter of one of his former “clients.” As she explained, George had inspired her to “give back to the community.” So, I guess the moral of the story is what goes around comes around! ☀️

Tatala

By Brenda Godfrey



My uncle Mike was widowed a couple of years ago. He and my aunt had been married for over 50 years and her passing broke his heart. Uncle Mike wasn't in the best of health to begin with, but his condition deteriorated. His diabetes got worse and he stopped taking care of himself. Even with all of our family's love and support, my uncle's heart wasn't in it anymore. And then my cousin brought home Tatala (Yiddish for little male toddler or child).

We were all surprised when we were first introduced to Tatala. A rescued kitten, sweet, energetic and a bit of a scamp, he bonded with my uncle Mike immediately. To our delight, they became inseparable. Tatala quickly put himself to good use—spending much of his time nuzzling on my uncle's lap—a furry little “space heater.” And while life would never be the same as it was when my aunt was alive, the addition of that funny little cat had an immensely positive effect on the last few years of uncle Mike's life. ☀️