

He lovingly cared for his wife

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By Dave Havir

BIG SANDY, Texas—My biological father died in 1962 when I was only 9 years old. My mother lost not only her husband but the father of their four children.

Shortly thereafter, Gerald Gill entered our lives when he married our mother. He was a blessing to the four kids.

All four of us have expressed our appreciation for his positive influence upon our lives. But we most appreciate the way he took care of our mother.

Mom and Pop were married for 47 years. They accomplished so much together. Pop will readily admit that much of their success occurred because of the wisdom and strength of his wife.

Suffered a stroke

Their life together hit a bump in the road when on June 16, 1989 (at the age of 67), our mother suffered a stroke. Thankfully, she survived. She regained use of arms and legs, and her mind remained extremely sharp. Until her death, she was an avid reader, an expert at crossword puzzles and a master Scrabble player.

Even though her mind was as sharp as ever, her perception had changed. She began seeing things backwards. She would put her clothes on inside out, she would put her shoes on the wrong feet, and she would place her Scrabble letters backwards on the board. This was not a problem, except in one area of life. She could no longer drive an automobile.

My parents continued to travel from their Pennsylvania home. They visited our family in Texas and traveled to various states for religious festival observances. Although our mother could no longer help out with the driving, she remained a seasoned traveler.

Discovered diabetes

There was another effect that my mother learned about during her hospitalization due to her stroke. She learned that she was diabetic. She dealt with her diabetes for the last 21 years of her life. Our mother died on June 6, 2010.

Those who knew my parents during the past 21 years will attest to the wonderful care that our father, Gerald Gill, gave to our mother.

Early in her time with diabetes (beginning at age 67), she could monitor her meals and daily check her own sugar level. As she got older, our father began helping with the meals and checking her sugar level three to five times a day.

In the past two years, Pop began giving her insulin at 10:00 every night. Mom would wryly comment that she felt like a pincushion. She would joke that Pop was enjoying giving her pain for any troubles she may have given him in their life.

The best care

As various issues surfaced through the years, she looked to Pop to take care of her. And he did.

Whenever some of us would tell her that they could receive services like home health care or meals-on-wheels, she would explain that she didn't need those things as long as she had Pop.

When I visited the two of them in April of this year, I expressed my concern about them living in their home on the hill. It is a wonderful home in a beautiful setting. But, while it is a great place for middle-aged people, it is not a good home as people age.

They lived in that home together for 37 years. (I don't have any childhood memories there because my parents moved there after I left home for college. However, my wife, two sons and I have wonderful memories of visiting with my parents there.)

Although Pop was reluctant to leave their home on the hill, Mom was determined to stay.

Final chapter

Pop is a strong, healthy man, but he began wearing down. He went into a hospital on Friday, June 4, due to a ministroke. He was released on Monday, June 7.

While he was yet in the hospital, Mom was rushed to the same hospital on Sunday, June 6, and died in a nearby room. The spiritual race of our mother, and Pop's wife, is over. She is at peace awaiting the resurrection.

Mom was successful in avoiding moving away from her beloved home. Much of the credit for that goes to her husband, Gerald Gill, who took such wonderful care of her.

Since Pop took such good care of her 24 hours a day, seven days a week, he is going through double grieving. Not only does he miss her tremendously, but his whole life has changed drastically.

Pop is now ready to move from that beautiful house on a hill. As I have heard him say to various people since her death: "With Mom around, this used to be a home. Now it is only a house."

Pop will begin a new chapter in his life. One thing is for sure about the last chapter: He lovingly cared for his wife.