

## A JOURNEY TAKEN TOGETHER...

If you are on this site, I know exactly what you are going through. My father Gus developed Alzheimer's seven years ago. He was 78. The day to day with my dad was changing. His moods, his thoughts, his paranoia and the day he said "Mindy, there is something wrong in my head, but I don't know what." I remember not knowing what to say. I knew where we were heading. My mother had passed away years before. My dad was living alone and his changing behaviors worried me.

The days of me spending time with my sons who were still young and my husband became slim. I found myself spending most of my time helping my dad with all his activities of daily living. It seemed as though I had become the parent and he had once again become the child. Trying to be a mother, a wife and having a career, I knew I was not going to be able to face this disease alone. Alzheimer's is unrelenting. It became not handling things one day at a time, but one minute at a time. The changes were at times trying for me, as well as for him.

It was a day like any other starting with dad calling me at 4:00am telling me had put dinner in the oven, asking why it was dark out and why was I sleeping. I remember thinking if I could just reason with him and explain that it was bed time. He no longer understood AM from PM and I knew I was in for a long haul. Dad would drive to my home and have many minutes of clarity, and then the look on his face would change. I knew he was not understanding his changing mind. My father was an avid golfer for over 50 years. I can still remember sitting in the living room watching him start to communicate with the gentleman on the golf channel. He was speaking to him as though he was in our living room. I was shocked and afraid for him. I grabbed my phone and videotaped my dad, knowing no one would believe me. I still watch that video today.

I grew more tired as each day came and went. My dad would look so exhausted from sleeping all day and being up all night. Alzheimer patients are known for reversing the two. My job became almost impossible to continue. I had lost days with my children and their activities and I often felt that I didn't even know my own husband of twenty plus years. As isolated as my dad was becoming, I was on the same road with him.

The constant explaining, helping the paranoia, going over and over how and when to take his medication was becoming daunting to say the least. I was receiving over 40 calls a day from my father. A day like any other, my dad was at my home getting ready to leave. I walked him out to the car and waited for him to pull out of the driveway. He was not moving. I said "dad, what is wrong? Why are you not leaving?" He looked at me and said I don't know how. I remember my heart breaking standing next to this man who was my father, who did everything for me, who taught me how to be whom I am today. This brilliant, smart, loving, independent, handsome gentleman, my father, was no longer able to remember how to drive a car. I knew the time had arrived. A time I was not looking forward to-taking my father's car keys. How could I stop him from doing the things he loved? My fear was he would go downhill fast. I remember the day all too well. I took his keys and his independence was gone.

The days after this became even harder. He would call all day wanting to leave the house, but could no longer. Dad would call and call and ask when I could get him. I felt as though my life and his were spiraling out of control. Our situation was getting worse.

I knew I needed help. It was then that I started looking for a care giver, someone that could take him out to lunch, cook breakfast, get groceries, take him to the golf course to visit his friends, do laundry and all the other daily chores I was trying to accomplish. It was a God send. Yes I was afraid of having someone in my dad's home, yes, I was worried he would not allow them. The day came and it was not as smooth as I wanted, but each day dad and his caregiver grew closer. She became an extension of our family.

There is not a day that I do not think of my dad Gus. He was my inspiration for my business Home Is Where the Heart Is Home Care, LLC. I realized if I needed help, there are others out there that need help. It has been a blessing. I took something good away from something so awful and each day I smile knowing that my team of trained, loving, caregivers are helping others.

I took care of my father as long as I could. He spent his last year in a nursing home. The disease had ravaged his mind. His body was healthy. I have so much I could say. I only touched on a few days in the seven years we struggled. My father passed away October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015 surrounded by his loving family. I am here to tell other families facing these challenges that there is indeed help. Please call us and reach out. There is no question I can't answer, no help I can't offer. I did everything from caring for my dad, talking to Dr.'s, pre planning his funeral, doing elder planning to protect his assets and anything in between. My husband is an Attorney and helps me with Elder Planning questions along with helping our clients apply for Veterans Aid and Attendance.



**My father Gus on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. The disease was taking hold. No matter what, he always had a smile on his face. To my father Gus, who is my source of inspiration. A journey taken together has inspired my love for seniors and my desire to help our loved ones remain as happy and independent as long as possible. THANK YOU DAD. You are loved and missed each day. Mindy**