

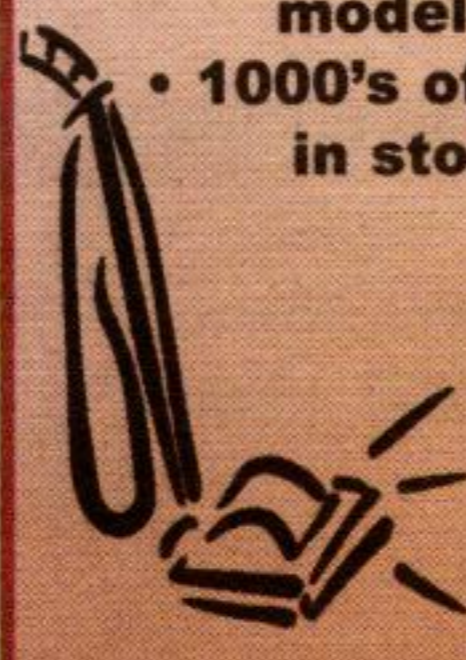
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One evening I was performing the last minute chores before retiring for the night, making sure the doors were locked, turning down the thermostat, and shutting off the lights. All the usual tasks one does before going to bed. My husband was already in bed, when he called to ask, "Is there some sort of electrical device in the bed pillows?" "No, of course not," I answered him. "Why do you ask?" "Because," he replied, "whenever I turned my pillow over, it beeped." I had to smile at that. He must have heard me setting the thermostat for the night!

I WONDER HOW HE'D SOUND IN FOCUS

On another occasion we were attending a concert at the Nursing Home. Usually they had pretty good musicians, but that day they had a singer who sang terribly off-key. I was cringing in my seat, but my husband, who used to be a photographer, remarked, "I wonder how he'd sound in focus?"

One of the most distressing aspects of living with Alzheimer Disease is the loneliness endured by the care-giver. For the most part, erstwhile friends just seem to disappear. Either they can't handle it or they are just too embarrassed to face the changes in the one with Alzheimer's. Whatever the reason, eventually the care-giver begins to feel cut off from the rest of the world and very, very lonely. Another contributing factor, of course, involves their eventual inability to have meaningful conversations with their loved one, due to the progression of the disease.

If you know someone travelling that long road with Alzheimer Disease, let them know you're there for them. Even that occasional contact with the outside world can be meaningful to them and might just brighten up an otherwise intolerable day. In fact, any small, seemingly insignificant act of kindness could make their day. Just don't neglect them! They need to know that they are not alone. They need to know that others are sharing their burden with them, and they need all the encouragement you

can give. They don't need criticism! I'm constantly amazed at those people who blatantly criticize someone else in a situation they know absolutely nothing about. Fortunately that number is small, and quickly declining, as people are becoming more informed about this insidious disease. However, the few that would censure another, who is already enduring unbearable circumstances, can cause inestimable damage for that person and only add to their intolerable burden. Before you condemn another, make sure you try walking in their moccasins first. I doubt you'll have anything left to say.

This article is adapted from *The Long Way Home, A Journey Through Alzheimer's* by Marian Ritchie
 marianritchie@sympatico.ca
 Epic Press ISBN 1-55306-683-9
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 \$19.95 Cdn/\$16.95 US

The book is available in Georgetown at: The Book Affair, The Georgetown Hospital Gift Shop, Marian Ritchie is a resident of Georgetown

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