

On the Path of the Perfecting Caregiver

**Reflections in Verse and Brief Essays
Not Contained in Other Documents**

Current Update: 12/19/25

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In this document I present reflections in verse and short essays during my role as caregiver and experiences subsequent to Marsha's passing. I try not to duplicate poems that exist in other places most notably those connected to Crostic Organizers.

2023

Saturday, January 20th

We may not see eye-to-eye and meet resistance;
But we feel heart-to-heart at our very core essence.

Tuesday, January 24th

What happens in the morning is often forgotten later in the day.
What happens by night is a mystery unfolding in its own way.

Tuesday, January 24th

What is the cost of contented involvement
When the day starts off already in descent?
What could I do to counteract
This atmosphere and positively impact ...
The interactions between Marsha and Ernie?
Perhaps it's time for a short little journey ...
To Marlboro and Hebron for a ride not so far
And stop by CVS in our Subaru car!

Tuesday, January 31st

I yearn to write,
As day becomes night,
Of the existence
Of my persistence
Each and every day;
I continue on my way.

Wednesday, February 1st

Two steps forward - one step behind
Progress, at first, is hard to find.
But continue on –
The days are gone
In the blink of an eye;
We can do but try.

2023

Sunday, February 5th

Today's a great day to take a ride
To Boston to be by Natyra's side
And celebrate a birthday with a meal and cake
And appreciate a welcome break
From the events of our daily routine
And watch some videos on her TV screen.

Friday, February 10th

As I bring a box of old pictures to the living room table,
We try to remember names and places as much as we are able.
This was you when we first met;
This was you when ... I forget.

Saturday, February 11th

There's still hope for this orchid to bloom again
We just need to water it now and then.
It's bound to survive for many a day
If we remember to stop and give it a spray!



Tuesday, February 14th

I stumble – I fall;
I think about it all.
I struggle – I try;
I often wonder why
I persist. – I overcome;
I now dance to a
different drum.

2023

Wednesday, February 22nd

The inner workings of the mind
Produce a dream that's one of a kind.
No one can tell its meaning and plot
Except for the one whose mind it sought
To enter that calm, still night -
To give the dreamer a clear insight
Into the workings of the human side
As she lives her life, it can be a guide
To figure out what's happened before
And in her life she can explore
The mysteries of the recent past
And make each dream forever last.
(Originally written in February 1994 but surfaced on this date for additional reflection.)

Saturday, February 28th

Another week ends
And each day tends
To have unique ways
To always amaze
Me in what is true
In all that I do.
This journey
Of Ernie's
Was not expected
Yet, I feel connected
Strongly with you
Through and through.

Sunday, March 12th

Each day has many ups and downs
Happy moods amid the frowns.
Tomorrow, I get to start anew.
It's another chance to review all that I do.

2023

Friday, April 7th

I realize, as I ride through this current storm,
This was not my expected retirement norm.
When you are confused, upset and angry
Your words sting but now don't hurt me
Because it is the inner you to whom I respond
And my love for you is my strength and bond.
Your pain surfaces and when it does each time
I struggle to find out how to make things rhyme.
I lose touch with the inner you
But, it's still there and I knew
I saw it yesterday when your soul did glow.
Life's lessons are hard but now I know
There is richness in each day we are together
And we will ride out this unpredictable weather.

Monday, April 10th

There's something about gift bags
That captured your eye.
As we walk down any aisle
You cannot pass by.
"What about this one?"
You ask with a smile.
I nod and agree
It has a great style!

Sunday, April 30th

The journey is a labyrinth and not a maze
And as we advance step-by-step throughout our days,
The progress is slow and oftentimes
We need to stop and rest and see what rhymes.
There is pain and anguish in some actions and words
As we listen together to life's minor chords.
The journey is an "us" but also a "me,"
To guide us forward to what's meant to be.

2023

Thursday, June 15th

What has my past prepared me to do
As I enter elderhood and approach 72?
Each step in the labyrinth that defines “Ernie”
Is the foundation that forms my inner journey.
I didn’t appreciate all life’s ups and downs
Amid much laughter and occasional frowns.
I am curious at the end of each day to see
The essence of the person I claim to be.
Moment-to-moment and step-by-step
The meanings in my life occur when I prep
Each day with calmness and direction
That form the totality of a collection
Of actions, thoughts, words and deeds
That have led me to what began as seeds
That find me in the later years of my life
Devoted to Marsha, my exceptional wife!

Sunday, June 18th

Waiting for the Fog to Lift

I was cleaning my glasses in hope that the muse may pay me a visit.
I think she is most apt to appear while we are engaged – mindfully – in any
task at hand.
I can see more clearly – the way ahead is foggy, but my glasses are ready.
The fog will lift to reveal what was already there awaiting a closer look.
There must be 30 notebooks, with hundreds of blank pages - - - waiting for
words to express the anguish of living with dementia.
They will not be filled by you – I keep them to record our relationship and
your memories.
I sense the anguish when you express your frustrations and wonderments.
I hear your words of despair.
I pledge my support to you wherever it takes me - to Dollar General,
Goodwill, or on the couch holding hands.
The activity, itself, doesn’t matter. The acknowledgement of your presence
and influence in my life surpasses time and place.
The quietness of sitting on the deck – the silence captures the essence of
our connection.

2023

Friday, July 14th

Purpose

Blisters hurtin' - - - nothin's certain.
Life can bring a sigh or scream.
Blisters turn to callous soon.
Learn from those who live their dream.
Everyone has many talents
To use - - - not throw away
And we often have to answer to
Our conscience day-by-day.
No one can tell us exactly how long
The length of time is along the way.
So live each day to the full extent
And at life's end you'll have lots to say
About inner feelings of what is right
And in what direction you did go
And how you used your talents and gifts
In a way that only you did know.
The road can be long – the path can be steep.
It's a journey of wonder and delight.
And the strength you build along the way
Makes your goals turn out just right.
Wonder, awe, peace and love
Are the ultimate aspirations
Of a life well lived and a time well spent
In our final deliberations.

Tuesday, July 18th

"I wish I could do more!" I hear you ask.
Later, I see you at the kitchen sink engaged in a task
Of rinsing some plates & knives and putting them in the drying rack –
I thank you for helping, knowing that I will be back
Later and wash the same items with hot water and soap.
That's OK, your expression of satisfaction is well worth the hope
That I can discover more ways for you to know
You are a partner, I value so.

2023

Friday, July 21st

The purpose in life is easy to see
For you to be you and me to be me.
It's a quiet, peaceful afternoon
Sitting on the deck – listening to a tune;
Warm and sunny and a pleasant breeze.
A bird flies by into the trees.
The sky above is blue with a light haze.
It could be one of the best 10 days
We've had for quite some time
Sitting outside and trying to rhyme
A few images and insights
On this day full of delights.

Thursday, August 17th

"Thank you," I heard you say
Softly at the end of the day.
Your face expressed such love
I was touched like grace from above
As your simple two-word expression
Came out of the blue – my impression
Of you changed – I don't know how
But I realized you have evolved now
In a way that is more peaceful & serene
As we live together in our daily routine.

2023

Friday, August 25th

It's the little things:

Coffee in the afternoon on the deck;
Watching the birds at the feeder;
Sitting in watchful silence;
Being present to each other;
A gentle breeze;
Clouds dot the sky;
Freshly mown grass;
Being mindful of what is offered;
The single Queen Elizabeth rose;
The book just begun;
The cardinal makes his presence known;

Oh, the Red Sox lost again last night:
Just wait until next year!

Sunday, August 27th

Being 72

Ring them bells and bring on good cheer
Ernie's celebrating his 72nd year!
Living each day – hour – minute - 1 at a time
Turning potential lessons into a rhyme.
I am in the closing years of my life
Providing caring and support to Marsha, my wife.
Money may bring riches, some might say
But my life is enriched each and every day.
Like watching the birds as a calming task -
They give no answers, so I don't ask.
My pace of movement may be slow
But this much I think I know –
It's not a race – this life I live
It's more about what I have to give
Toward a direction not quite clear
However, knowing Marsha will be quite near.

2023

Tuesday, August 29th

When I pause and take time to select
Experiences upon which I can reflect,
My thoughts and feelings become more clear
And I'm able to see and to hear
The connections that exist all along
And to compose the verses to my song.
It's an honor and privilege to share these words.
Now I'm off to watch the birds!

Saturday, September 9th

I am more than the sum of my experiences.
They form the basis for my emotional intelligences.

Monday, September 11th

Thank you for your presence.
I value your very essence
As we enter our later years of life
From a devoted husband to a beautiful wife.
Thank you for the warmth and care
That I daily feel in the air
When you're around I can plainly see
Just how much you mean to me.
Thank you for our present and what will be;
Our life is rich for both you and me.
It's now a time for daily reflection
To renew our love and daily affection.

Sunday, October 8th

There are lessons to learn each minute of the day.
Most of them unplanned as I journey on my way.
Being open to each possibility.
Will certainly add great quality
If I stop and 5 deep breaths I do take
Even Yoda would be proud of the rhymes I do make.

2023

Tuesday, October 17th

Some people have nothing to say
and say it all day long.
Other people have a lot to say
but need someone near to hear their song.

Thursday, October 26th

Let it chill.
Let us be still.
Let it show.
Let us grow.
Let it be me.
Let us be.
Let it sit for awhile.
Let us smile.
Let it be enough.
Let us not be gruff.
Let it be known.
Let us be shown.

Thursday, October 26th

Simple Moments

Breakfast made of scrambled egg;
Trimmed a rose bush down a peg.
Dishes in the draining rack
Laundry finished – sort and pack.
Sitting on the deck and holding hands
Looking over our backyard lands.
These peaceful moments of content
When I focus on each moment
of the day to see what's next
And add some new words to my text.

2023

Monday, November 13th

The dishes can wait.
The dust can settle.
It's never too late
To put on the kettle
And sit for a spell
To reflect on life;
Things will be well
For me and my wife.

2024

Thursday, January 4th

A Circle of Support surrounds you
Whether you are aware of who they are:
People who are in your life
Who love you both near and far.

They have a commitment and purpose
To provide more choices for you
To lead a life of dignity
And to be content in all you do.

The challenges will be many
In the weeks and months ahead.
But, we are here to guide you
And be your golden thread.

Sunday, January 7th

You don't understand the reason
That this icy and snowy season
Restricts what we are able to do
You are angry and unhappy, too.

Monday, January 27th

There are lessons to learn and voices to hear
Each minute of the day – both far and near.

2024

Friday, February 2nd

Sitting on the couch
Listening to the music
We both do our part -
Holding hands
Making a connection -
Heart-to-Heart.

Monday, April 8th

I can compose a list of things to do
And I guess this planning is the same for you.
But when do I do all these chores?
There's not enough time in or out of doors!
I know what - I know what's next
I'll make a new list and then lay down and rest!
And I think you'll agree I have a very good reason -
For at 2:00 PM is the opening day for the Red Sox Home Season!

Monday, April 15th

The wars still go on, but out of view.
The game show contestants win a fortune or two.
The seconds will tick by
With you by my side
Wondering what will be in store
When the clock approaches quarter to four.
Minute by minute we live our days
Seeking our riches in ordinary ways.

2024

Monday, May 6th

It's what it is;
No more – no less
Life can be orderly.
Life can seem a mess.

But, there are lessons there
Amid moments of the day
Between the movements
Of what we do and say.
The journey of two
Includes me and you.
The journey of Ernie
Is mine alone to be.

Each incidence is not a coincidence
We can't predict the future
But rest in the providence
Of what will happen next
To be taken in context.
The love we share today
As we each go on our way.

Tuesday, May 21st

Dishes and laundry are never quite done.
Add cleaning and dusting to the ongoing fun.
Reaching in the drier I pull out some clothes,
And think about where each of them goes.
I wash dishes – just a few at a time
Then read a chapter from a book about crime.
There is always something else that I could do,
But right now I'm sitting on the deck with you.
You center me in all ways that are good
And if I look closely, I know that I could
Figure out the meaning of my life
Together as we live as husband and wife.

2024

Friday, August 9th

There's an innocence about her;
She can't commit a sin.
The gates of heaven will open
And when they let her in
Applause will be heard in the air.
I hope before the gate is closed
They let me join her there.

Saturday, August 3rd

Care-Giver Olympics

There are no medals, I've been told.
There is no Silver, Bronze or Gold.
There are many consequences
Among the daily experiences.
Success occurs in smaller steps
Amid the daily activity preps.
Mistakes are made.
There are no grades.
A marathon rather than a sprint and
we may get a clue or hint –
From peers who walk their very own journey.
Mine is the Tale of Marsha and Ernie.

Monday, August 19th

Just like Edgar Guest did say,
Think about what you did today.
And write a verse that contains a rhyme
It's a way to reflect and honor the time
That caught your attention . . . and then
You'll remember this moment all over again.

2024

Monday, October 21st

WHAT will be will be.

HOW will I look within to see . . .

WHY these events are happening to me

WHERE our paths both lead to eternity?

WHAT will Marsha teach me today?

HOW will I show my love in what I say?

WHY are these events happening in this way?

WHERE is the path to being OK?

Sunday, September 8th

The Caregiver's Journey

You will never learn all there is to know on
this journey you have entered.

You will discover some core values and truths
that will surely help you be centered - - -

To begin that journey - you do have a choice - - -
Hear that distant, inner voice ...

To become fully engaged in this one-of-a-kind process
you have to allow yourself full access - - -

To the wisdom you hear, and see and think
and take that glass and have a long drink - - -

Because it's never empty and it's never full;
you just have to know the pull - - -

Of contradictions, paradox and never-ending learning
that grip you hard and leave you yearning - - -

For how to support your very special one;
your journey has only just begun - - -

To unfold into a path that knows no end;
a labyrinth of sorts that is going to send - - -

You to depths unplanned and emotions so high
but also for strategies for where, what and why!

2024

Friday, October 25th

I'm eating my mango sorbet
watching you sleeping on the couch.
It is 8:56 pm and I am reading a book by Jonathan Kozol –
The Theft of Memory – about his dad's experiences with dementia.
You look quite peaceful.
There are times during the day when your eyes tear up
and there is a frown on your face. I wonder what you're thinking.
Your sister, Kathie, is coming for a visit from Murphysboro, Illinois.
The sit-to-stand recliner is wonderful and you were able to stand
in a matter of minutes compared to hours yesterday.
Good night, my dear.

Thursday, November 21st

Welcome to **any day**;
Closely related to **some day**;
A lot like **every day**;
And yet like **no day**.
Anything might happen;
Something is bound to happen;
Everything in its own time;
Nothing is certain.
Good events could happen **anywhere**;
They are certainly happening **somewhere**;
There are common events **everywhere**;
The exact events will happen **nowhere**.
Dementia can happen to **anyone**;
Dementia will happen to **someone**;
The future of Dementia needs **everyone**;
The effects of Dementia will escape **no one**.
Any place can claim to be a good place;
Some places are actually good places;
Every place can't be **THE** best place;
No place is like home, which could be the best place.
Anybody could be a caregiver;
Somebody must be a caregiver;
Everybody should support caregivers;
Nobody can replace a loved one as a primary caregiver.

Steps That Lead to Our Basement as Reminders of the Ingredients of My Caregiving Supports

I wanted a visual reminder of key concepts/ways of being in my role as caregiver. I taped each word or phrase on a different step going to our basement so that every time I went down or up these stairs, I would be reminded of the importance of each item in my day-to-day interactions with Marsha.

The **journey** continues each and every day
Step-by-step is the only way.

Learning is a process of making mistakes
and after each one success often awaits

Emergence is the unfolding of our talents and gifts
As the path ahead continually shifts.

Uncertainty is a truth that lingers near;
It's a fact of life and not to fear.

Togetherness means more as we engage;
And enjoy our lives at this elder stage.

Mindfulness is a way of life as we breathe and talk;
And slow down the pace of the steps we walk.

Small Steps are necessary on the continual journey
To bring peace and contentment to Marsha and Ernie.

My **Attitude** affects my moods from morning till night;
Keeping it positive turns the darkness into light.

Encouragement is expressed in both words and silence.
Keep things positive as I provide my assistance.

Support comes in many shapes and sizes,
Depending on the exact challenge that arises.

Acceptance recognizes the limits of our abilities,
But does not define the bounds of life's possibilities.

Unconditional love asks no questions and seeks no demands.
Its message is felt when we hold each other's hands.



2025

Wednesday, January 1st

I had a conversation with Marsha today
I asked her to listen carefully to what I had to say.
“I think you know some changes are happening to you
And that I will always be here to see you through.
We are in this life together - - - I will always be there
To support, comfort and provide you with my loving care.
You talk with your eyes and the way you squeeze my hand.
I can sense your love and I think that’s just grand!”
After I was through talking to Marsha, I heard her say,
“Be careful,” she whispered as I went on my way.

Thursday, January 9th

I have an announcement to make.
I have years of writing to review, give or take.
I “say” I need to watch closely over your fate.
But, in reality, you have given me a clean slate
To delve deeply into all my creative works.
By being in your presence, one of my perks
Is to review, edit, revise and rewrite
And bring the past into a new light.
You are calm, peaceful, content and serene
As I sit in front of my computer screen.
I am blessed by your presence every day.
Thank you for everything! What more can I say!

2025

Tuesday, January 14th

*Breathe --- Read --- Edit --- Create
It's a cycle of being in a mindful state.*

*Read --- Digest --- Create --- Invest
The best things in life are not on the test!*

*Eat --- Drink --- Asleep --- Awake
Know the process of give and take.*

*Music --- News --- Sports --- TV
Doesn't make much sense to me.*

*Come --- Go --- Stay --- Depart
Love's the answer heart-to-heart..*

Thursday, February 6th

Today is Marsha's 76th birthday
I marvel at her dignity, calmness of living each day
Knowing she is loved and cared for and may
I take this time to acknowledge the lessons I am learning as I lay
Down beside her, as I say
"Show me the way."

Sunday, February 9th

There is dignity in how you compose yourself.
I sit and wonder at your calmness.
I will remember you when my days are numbered and
For how your eyes spoke with love.
You squeeze my hand with tenderness
As you lie down beside me.
I am honored to provide you support
for all you have given me over the years.
You have my respect and admiration.
You teach me not to let limitations
Get in the way of living a full life.
Thank you for choosing me as your partner.
I couldn't be happier.

2025

Saturday, May 29th

While Sitting at the Airport

Where do I go from here?
When will my final days come near?
How will I fill up my time
Do I have more verses to my rhyme?

Sitting in the airport writing some notes
Looking for wisdom in my search for quotes.
It's been about 2 months since Marsha passed.
My how the time seems to speed by so fast!

I'm revising updates from the past few years.
It's time to reflect and shift my gears
To new endeavors and listen to my inner voice
To see what I hear about having a choice ...

To venture forth and live day by day
To see what adventures may come my way.
I'm not done yet – there's more to do
Before my time on this earth is through.

Monday, March 31st

***As I sit here writing and look across the room at Janice, I keep thinking
of the most heartbreaking question: which of us will go first? Billy
Crystal***

*I don't have this question anymore,
but I once did wonder what would be in store
for the one who is left alone.
The way things turned out we could not have known
it would be you who would leave us first
Amid our lives that go unrehearsed.
I think I am now better prepared
because of the love we have shared.*

2025

Monday, June 30th

Written after reading an essay by Courtney Martin when describing her interactions with her father who lives with Alzheimer's.

Questions

It all seems like a dream
And I wonder as you seem
To stare vacantly at the wall
What are you thinking? Is it all
A mixture of sounds and sights:
A cacophony of lights
Impinging on your mind
To create a kind
Of magical world in which you play a part?
What's my role in this art
Of reality and imagination?
There is a temptation
Of just letting you be,
But what of me?
I used to hold a special place
Years ago but there is still a space
Between us now that I can enter
When I slow my breath and center
Myself to be in the moment with you.
It's a peaceful feeling as you do
Your thing and I do mine
And enjoy each other's presence at this somber time

2025

Monday, August 10th

There is always one more:

- ❖ place to clean where dust likes to dwell
amid thoughts from the depths of my memory's well.
- ❖ photo to remind me of our past and
gifts I did give that I thought would last.
- ❖ "I Love You" at the tip of my tongue and
songs in my head that are yet to be sung.
- ❖ reason to always do what is right and
always engage in a new delight.
- ❖ quote from the people I have read
as I marvel at the words they have said.
- ❖ breath to begin a new day - - - until there isn't.

Tuesday, August 25th

I haven't been out on the deck by myself for quite some time. It's a very pleasant August day – my birthday eve to be exact. The day lilies are in bloom once again in the center of the backyard. There's a clear blue sky – slight breeze on occasion.

A butterfly comes over to inspect me as it sets about to sense the order of things. I must not be worth its interest. "What are you doing out here," it might be thinking.

How long will I stay?
It depends.

How long does it take to drink a large cup of Kona, whole bean, ground coffee?

Do the empty chairs talk to each other when no one is around? Are they jealous of the one I chose for my stay on the deck?

Well, that's the final sip.

"How long was I out here?" I wonder.

"I wasn't keeping time," replied my inner voice.

2025

Saturday, September 13th

A Very Non-technical Definition of Dementia

Dementia results in a change in what a loved one's brain is now capable of doing, without the loss of the essence of who that person is. Time spent between caregiver and loved one is a process of rediscovering the values and commitment they shared and can be a time of great insight and love represented in ways unique to each person.