

# **On the Path of the Perfecting Caregiver**

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

**Current Update: 12/19/25**

**Ernest L. Pancsofar**

*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 20<sup>th</sup>**

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

## **Tuesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>**

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 24<sup>th</sup>**

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 31<sup>st</sup>**

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 1<sup>st</sup>**

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 5<sup>th</sup>**

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 10<sup>th</sup>**

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 forgot.

## **Saturday, February 11<sup>th</sup>**

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 14<sup>th</sup>**

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 22<sup>nd</sup>**

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 28<sup>th</sup>**

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 12<sup>th</sup>**

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 7<sup>th</sup>**

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 10<sup>th</sup>**

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 30<sup>th</sup>**

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 15<sup>th</sup>**

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 18<sup>th</sup>**

### **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 14<sup>th</sup>**

## **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 18<sup>th</sup>**

“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 21<sup>st</sup>**

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 17<sup>th</sup>**

“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 25<sup>th</sup>**

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 27<sup>th</sup>**

### **Being 72**

Ring them bells and bring on good cheer  
Ernie's celebrating his 72<sup>nd</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup>**

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 9<sup>th</sup>**

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

## **Monday, September 11<sup>th</sup>**

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 8<sup>th</sup>**

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 26<sup>th</sup>**

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 26<sup>th</sup>**

### **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 13<sup>th</sup>**

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 4<sup>th</sup>**

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 7<sup>th</sup>**

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 27<sup>th</sup>**

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

# 2024

## **Friday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>**

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

## **Monday, April 8<sup>th</sup>**

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 15<sup>th</sup>**

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 6<sup>th</sup>**

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 21<sup>st</sup>**

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 9<sup>th</sup>**

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 3<sup>rd</sup>**

### **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 19<sup>th</sup>**

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 21<sup>st</sup>

**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 8<sup>th</sup>

### 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 25<sup>th</sup>

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 21<sup>st</sup>

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 1<sup>st</sup>**

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 9<sup>th</sup>**

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 14<sup>th</sup>**

*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 6<sup>th</sup>**

Today is Marsha's 76<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup>**

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 31<sup>st</sup>**

***As I sit here writing and look across the room at Janice, I keep thinking of the most heartbreak 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 30<sup>th</sup>**

**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 10<sup>th</sup>**

**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 25<sup>th</sup>**

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 13<sup>th</sup>**

## **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.