

# On the Path of the Perfecting Caregiver

Looking at Retirement from Two  
Different Perspectives

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## Ernie Pancsofar

**Date of Retirement**  
**08/15/21**

**R**EFRESHMENT  
**E**MBRACEMENT  
**T**ESTAMENT  
**I**MPROVEMENT  
**R**ECOMMITMENT  
**E**NCHANTMENT  
**M**OVEMENT  
**E**MPOWERMENT  
**N**OURISHMENT  
**T**EMPERAMENT

My official date of retirement from Central Connecticut State University was August 15, 2021. A few years prior to that day, I organized 10 areas of expectations for what retirement could offer me. After August 15, 2021, I kept the expectations the same, but modified how I might address each one in my new role as primary caregiver for my wife, Marsha, who was to live the next four years with an increasingly more limiting cognitive disease known as Alzheimer's.

## REFRESHMENT

### **In Anticipation of Retirement:**

Refreshment doesn't have to be eaten as food.  
Refreshment is a state of mindfulness, a mood  
To nurture myself in ways that are good  
And to look for ways that I could  
Relax and slow my stride  
And go along for the ride  
That no one else will ever make.  
It's my time to take  
It easy and reduce my stress  
And begin to write and address  
What my life means; it seems  
Refreshment enhances my future dreams.

### **In My New Caregiving Role:**

At the beginning of each day; it's time to renew  
A refreshment of sorts between me and you.  
Yesterday's gone and it won't be coming back.  
Today is a new day to keep me on track.  
To stay in the moment is how I try to be  
And wash the slate clean with a cup of coffee.

## EMBRACEMENT

### **In Anticipation of Retirement:**

Embracement requires a comfort with uncertainty  
As I leave the security of the university.  
Life doesn't follow a prescribed path;  
It's not a sequential type of math  
With formulas that guide my undertaking,  
But more like chaos theory with its own making  
Of unpredictable and unplanned events.  
I need to embrace life's providence  
And welcome both good and unpleasant times  
When life does not flow into nice even rhymes,  
But takes many a twist and turn.  
Embrace where it leads and not yearn  
For what I planned for in ages hence  
And remember it's always the present tense.

### **In My New Caregiving Role:**

It's a time to hold on to the love we share  
And embrace the past and present as we prepare  
For an unknown future of time and presence,  
Life is stripped down to its very core essence.  
Don't the days fly by so fast?  
I live each day as if it could be our last;  
Embracing the uncertainty tomorrow will bring  
When the bells of love and hope will ring!

# TESTAMENT

## In Anticipation of Retirement:

My testament involves recording my journey  
Of a life well lived – the path of Ernie.  
My writing takes shape in both poems and prose.  
I have time for reflections and much to disclose  
About looking back with a sense of satisfaction  
And looking ahead for coming attractions.  
Who will be reading my journals of wonderment?  
I hope they will refrain from any harsh judgment.  
Age brings wisdom from the telling of my stories.  
Age allows for quiet times for my own inventories.  
These words to which I attest are true to the core  
When I end this life, I wonder what will be in store?  
Will I remember my time on the planet earth?  
What will occur during my time of rebirth?  
I was here, I lived and I will die.  
My testament will end with a heartfelt good-bye.

## In My New Caregiving Role:

You (Marsha) are a testament to all that is good  
And your eyes convey love and if I could  
Share my thoughts with you each day  
“What a joy to be with you!” is what I would say.  
You are kind and caring and loving as can be;  
You are a true blessing that has come to me.  
I attest to your influence in this part of my life.  
You are a true partner, a companion and wife.  
The support you receive to live in your house  
Is sincerely given from Ernie, your spouse.  
Let me record this affirmation of mine  
As we age well together like fine vintage wine.

## IMPROVEMENT

### **In Anticipation of Retirement:**

Improvement is an ever-present task.  
It's based on the questions I need to ask.  
What is it that I will measure?  
What is it that I endeavor  
To encounter throughout each of my days?  
Achievement and success are not the only ways  
To determine who I want to be  
As I am perfecting the life of Ernie.  
I am who I am and nothing more.  
I continually evolve as I explore  
New supports and I need to get better  
At understanding how to determine whether  
Improvement can be measured as one long memory  
Or maybe it's just a category on Jeopardy.

### **In My New Caregiving Role:**

Always aiming to improve each day  
Is the basis of perfecting our way  
To a better caring and mutual assistance  
And evolve in our daily practice of persistence.  
We are all on this long and winding road  
Attempting to unravel the code  
Of what our place is upon this earth  
And why events have unfolded since our birth  
And bring us to where we now exist.  
We must begin each day and insist  
On improving our inner, core essence;  
Living our lives and blessed by our presence  
To thoughtfully reflect and inspect our views  
And listen to each of our personal muse.

## RECOMMITMENT

### **In Anticipation of Retirement:**

Where is the zeal of a younger age?  
Where is the zest as I turn the page  
On a major passage – a transition  
To commit once again to a position  
Of values I hold to be true  
To recommit myself before too  
Many years slip by  
Without asking why  
I came this way – took this road  
And lived by an ethical code  
And put into practice all that I hold dear.  
Who knows when I will meet my final year  
Of a life well lived – one of pride?  
It's certainly been an enjoyable ride.

### **In My New Caregiving Role:**

I commit my time and energy to you  
As I continue to see you through  
The challenging path you are on.  
We are in this together  
Through this stormy weather  
To meet whatever unfolds beyond.  
I will not despair  
While you are in my care  
We gently travel this road we walk upon.  
You prepare me for what lies ahead  
You may very well get there instead  
Of me – I'll join you when my time dawns.  
For now, please accept my love  
As we welcome the grace from above  
And write more verses to our song.

## ENCHANTMENT

### **In Anticipation of Retirement:**

Magic and mystery can still unfold  
Since no age is ever too old  
For enchantment to come forth.  
It may come from the south, east, west or north  
Without warning and it can be felt  
Deep inside my being as I am dealt  
A breath of fresh air to clear my head  
And approach each day without the dread  
Of boredom, sameness or mediocrity  
And my departure from the university  
Will be welcomed. I have nothing to hide.  
Enchantment will always be right by my side!

### **In My New Caregiving Role:**

There's still magic in the air when I'm with you.  
You have provided me an opportunity to renew  
How I interact with you in ways unplanned  
But our love is strengthened as I hold your hand  
When we lie in bed at the end of the day.  
I wonder at your calmness and peaceful way.  
Your presence enriches my life;  
I couldn't ask for a more devoted wife.  
The journey has been rocky to get to today  
But in all honesty, I just have to say  
I am charmed by your loving eyes  
That speak to me in a look so wise.  
The unexpected turn our path has taken  
Has changed over time and awakens  
An inner awareness of all that I hold true  
Still becomes available as I love you.

# MOVEMENT

## **In Anticipation of Retirement:**

I don't move in quite the same ways  
As I did in some of my yesterdays.  
Yet, I advance forward toward a major goal:  
To discover what's there in my very own soul.  
Slow down – don't be in a rush.  
Take more breaks – put the phone on hush.  
Steady as you go – to coin a phrase;  
Movement in a labyrinth and not in a maze.  
Minute-by-minute and step-by-step  
Carefully walking in order to prep  
My mind and body into being one.  
There's a lot more to do before this life is done.

## **In My New Caregiving Role:**

Movement can take you from your reclining chair  
To the kitchen to see what's happening there.  
Movement can progress at a very uneven pace  
As we now live together with dignity and grace.  
I look over at your breath in the middle of the night  
And once I see movement, everything's all right.  
Our progress is measured in interesting ways  
Like living with mindfulness in our current days  
Or how we connect without needing to speak  
As I wipe a strand of hair from your cheek.  
Movement is measured in space and time  
As I write down my words in this verse of rhyme.

## EMPOWERMENT

### **In Anticipation of Retirement:**

I have strength and ability to act  
On my own behalf. In fact  
My life's goals have been achieved.  
Now it's icing on the cake and I'm relieved  
To be satisfied with my wants and needs  
And perhaps I have planted some seeds  
For others to continue to hoe  
For whatever ends. I know  
My life has had meaning  
For I am still achieving  
What matters most:  
An inner sense of peace as I post  
My notes for whomever to read;  
The values and truths I have believed.

### **In My New Caregiving Role:**

I need to give you more choices during the day.  
This is your home and you should have a say  
In where you want to go and wander;  
I'll be your guide on our daily saunter.  
I feel empowered to tell our story  
Of the ins and outs of our current journey.  
Help me learn to understand your point of view  
Help me listen to what you want to do.  
Sometimes it's hard to know your intentions;  
I will listen more closely to your facial expressions.  
We are not in any hurry; we live at a slower pace.  
You enhance our lives with your enduring grace.  
You whisper more than you talk out loud.  
You squeeze my hand and you make me proud  
To be your companion and best friend forever  
In each and every family endeavor.

## **NOURISHMENT**

### **In Anticipation of Retirement:**

Food for the body and drink for the soul;  
Nourishment helps make each of us whole.  
We drink from the cup of hope  
To help each one of us cope  
With the challenges and strife.  
We eat from the bread of life.  
It sustains us to do what is right  
And brings us into the light  
Knowing that the shadows need to be found  
For it is there where truths resound.  
The yin and yang / a balance  
Nourish us in its silence.

### **In My New Caregiving Role:**

You nourish my quality of life  
By your presence of being my loving wife.  
Each moment provides opportunities to renew  
As I begin my morning with a coffee brew.  
Books are the source of many inspirations  
As I age gracefully in my time of reflections.  
I draw strength by your presence.  
I am humbled by the changing dynamics  
Of our love and as each day goes by,  
I live in the present and don't ask why  
Days unfold as they often do.  
I am grateful for living each one with you.

## TEMPERAMENT

### **In Anticipation of Retirement:**

What is my nature? What makes me tick?  
What brings everything into focus before I click  
That shutter – to expose who I really am?  
Do I roar like a lion or bleat like a lamb?  
Dispositions surround my intuitions.  
Mindfulness influences my receptiveness.  
My character is like an open book  
Through the looking glass I can look  
And gain a sense of what really drives me  
Into being the current version of the man called Ernie.  
I evolve in and out of a different mood.  
Sometimes I'm pleasant and sometimes I brood,  
But my inner voice most often is clear  
About the values and truths that I still hold dear.

### **In My New Caregiving Role:**

You are calm, peaceful and serene  
As you sit in the recliner – a queen  
Over all that you can view  
And throughout the day I take my cue  
For what brings contentment and cheer  
By having you at my side quite near  
To maintain an atmosphere of hope  
For each day that we can cope  
With the changing nature of your needs  
Wherever life takes us and leads  
To new ways to understand  
What may come our way unplanned.