

**On the Path of
the Perfecting Caregiver**

**Healing Through Creative
Practices ***

**Reflections Developed
During a
Writing Workshop
Based on Four Prompts**

**BED
SHOE
TIME
PROFILE**

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*** Title originates from Guy Sol, who coined this phrase**

Responding to Four Writing Prompt

During October and November of 2025, I participated as a peer among creative writers whose outputs were facilitated by Deanne Poulos (caregiver services manager), from Duet: Partners in Health and Aging located in Phoenix, Arizona. After our first meeting, she suggested a writing prompt: **BED**. I had fun with this prompt when I remembered a pod cast from a few years ago, *Everything is Alive*. A voice was given to an inanimate object who was interviewed about what being that object meant to them. Herbert the Hospital bed became my object of choice. I quickly realized the quality of participants who soon became writing allies as we wrote about our experiences as a current or recent caregiver/care partner for a loved one. Our second writing prompt was **SHOE**. I developed several stanzas of verse about the image of this object as it pertained to my role as caregiver for my wife, Marsha, whose death on March 22, 2025, was still fresh on my mind. **TIME** was the prompt for the third writing assignment. I used a process that I have followed in my journaling, which is described just prior to a crostic organizer and accompanying lines of verse on this topic. Finally, **PROFILE** was offered as the final writing prompt. I located objects from the various rooms in my home to become ingredients in the initials of my wife's first name: MARSHA. I then expanded on each image with lines of verse.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed both composing and listening to the highly creative products from each participant. I am reminded of a quote from Sol Guy, *Healing through Creative Practices*. The grieving process from Marsha's passing is a time of healing enhanced by my participation with this writing group.

Responding to the Writing Prompt

BED

As I thought about this writing prompt, I remembered a podcast from several years ago, Everything is Alive, in which inanimate objects were given a voice and responded to questions posed by an interviewer. I wondered what Marsha's hospital bed might have to say to specific questions I might pose.

HerBert the Hospital Bed (as interviewed by My Person's caregiver)

What surprised you the most when you were assembled in our home?

I was given a place of honor in the living room where everyone could see me and see how important I was to provide My Person with support and comfort.

What's it like to hold a "dying person" with such a frail body?

I don't view My Person as a "dying person." They are a body who needs what I can provide them as they rest and participate in daily life with their loved ones. I feel privileged and honored to have been assigned this role of comfort and support. I live in the moment.

Were there some tense times between Your Person and her loved ones?

Yes, there were misunderstandings about how to respond to the reality within which My Person lived that differed from her loved ones' realities. But – when they saw the light and accepted My Person's new realities as their new realities, they got along splendidly.

Did you have any friends in Your Person's living room?

Yes, Mary, a sit-to-stand-recliner, was a constant presence and we know each other from the Medical Supply store where we both came from when Our Person entered hospice. We work as a team and Mary often lets me know what Our Person's support needs are after spending time with her during the day. Stan, my other good friend is a TV and he set such a pleasant atmosphere with a dash of light classical music in the background.

What is unique about you?

Well, I'm glad you asked that question. Unlike a stationary bed, I can bend my frame to enhance the posture of My Person as they rest or sit up depending on their needs. However, I can't press the controls that bend my frame. I must rely on My Person's loved ones to do that --- but I am always at the ready!

Do you communicate with Your Person?

We don't use words to communicate. I am present to be of support and serve both the physical and spiritual entities of My Person. I don't need praise for the diligence of my support. It's what I do, but extra-long sheets and a clean exterior are most welcomed!

Any final words?

Thank you for asking me these questions. We are often underappreciated.

Responding to the Writing Prompt

SHOE

My first activity was to write down associations with the word “shoe” and not try to draw any conclusions right away. I noticed two of Marsha’s shoes in the living room and closet. I remembered a cartoon with the title SHOE, which I had enjoyed reading years ago. While sitting in the waiting room of a car repair shop, I started composing the first draft of a set of verses that I would then reorder into a coherent sequence of thought.

From my Calendar for October 24, 2025

*Every time we make a mindful step,
we are engaged in an act of enlightenment.
We can be enlightened about the fact that
we are making a step.*

Each step can have beauty in it. - Thich Nhat Hanh

While taking my steps on my walk today,
I wondered back on what this wise person had to say.
I listened to music around a Town Green quite near
“Diamonds on the Soles of Her Shoe” was playing in my ear:
A very appropriate tune for my writing theme
And I wondered what these lyrics could mean.

Let’s take a brief look
At a story I read in a long-forgotten book
When just as a master composer did cease
Playing on the piano a beautiful piece,
His pupil asked, “That was beautiful, what does it mean?”
The composer sat back down and without causing a scene
Played it again.

**Shoes are a lot like people.
They come in all shapes and sizes.
They exist to provide comfort and support.
They're not out to win any footwear prizes.
They have names and trusted brands.
They are like gloves we put on our hands.**

**My father may be 108 in just a short while
He has owned many shoes that have logged many a mile.
And just as a caregiver's shoes are hard to fill
They need to belong to a person with skill
In welcoming each day with challenges anew.
It really does take a village crew.**

**We all walk in the shoes of a person who cares
For the health and wellbeing of a person who dares
To want a life of comfort and who shares
Their own gifts of being and of presence
So that we can get to know their very essence.**

**Walk with me but take off your shoes
To a world of adventure and if you choose
We will learn more about our inner strengths
And be present and go to great lengths
To teach each other about loving and caring
And all about togetherness and sharing.**

**I noticed a pair of your shoes on the front doormat
And another pair in the hallway closet that
Had escaped the gathering of items for Goodwill
And they continue to remind me of your presence still.
These shoes remind me of messages you have left behind
Just for my wondering eyes to find.**

**SHOE is a cartoon strip I used to read
By Jeff MacNelly and I need
A quote to discover his secret for productivity
He says, "a deadline enhances my current creativity."**

**Life doesn't go quite as planned
Life has its own unique demands
That change and shift at unpredictable times
To add richness to my lines of rhyme.**

**What does Marsha's life mean to me?
The answer is not so simple to see.
How I continue in my lifelong journey
In perfecting what it means to be Ernie
Perhaps, my reply will become clearer
When my final days and hours come nearer.**

Responding to the Writing Prompt

TIME

There were five steps to the creation of this writing assignment.

- 1) I read through recent entries in my personal journal where I had quotes related to the theme of this writing assignment: time. I located nine quotes.**
- 2) Searching through the nine quotes, I highlighted 13 words or phrases the caught my attention and resonated the most with me on this topic.**
- 3) I decided to use the expression *A STITCH IN TIME saves nine* and placed the initial 13 letters in a vertical column in the middle of a page in a crostic style format.**
- 4) I went back to the highlighted words/phrases from step 2 and placed each one in a row of the crostic that also contained a letter from that entry.**
- 5) Finally, I composed a verse of four lines for each row of the crostic, which included the highlighted words.**

The verses were not ordered in any specific sequence.

Quotes from Recent Journal Entries on the Theme of Time

*Breath, breath in the air
Cherish this moment
Cherish this breath
Tomorrow is a new day for everyone*
Follow the Sun, lyrics by Xavier Rudd

When you pay attention to your in-breath and out-breath, you bring yourself home to the present moment, to the here and the now, and you are in touch with life. Thích Nhất Hạnh

Life is a life sentence; life is passing time; life is freethinking. Tehching Hsieh

People always say time heals. Time doesn't necessarily heal anything. It allows you to manage things. There are occasions where you feel the pain as if it just happened, but you know that it's a fleeting moment. Jason Reynolds

How we spend our days is of course how we spend our lives. What we do with this hour and that one is what we are doing.
Annie Dillard

When I was young, I admired clever people. Now that I am old, I admire kind people.
George Saunders

Because once we've spent time sitting with the histories and relationships and realizations of the past, it's time to tend to our grief in the present tense.
Carla Fernandez

... by spending time with their objects or telling their story, and continue coming into presence, to not ignore the range of emotions related to your grief, but to get curious about what lessons it has to offer; ... Carla Fernandez

If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present. Ludwig Wittgenstein

Highlighting 13 Word/Segments from these Quotes that Resonate With Me at This Time

*Breath, breath in the air
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Spe **N**d

His **T**ories

Realizat **I**ons of the Past

Range of E **M**otions

L **E**ssons

A Stitch in Time

A stitch in time saves nine, as the expression goes
As my life continues in ebbs and flows
Of time to **spend** on many an activity
To test the boundaries of my creativity.

The **present moment** is where we live
But memories form that daily give
Me pause to dwell on all we've achieved
Amid the blessings we've received.

Eternal life is all a big question to me
So I'll just let the mystery be
And let our values be our guide
Formed from years with you by my side.

My journal has hundreds of pages of entries
That form the basis for the **histories**
Of activities and events of the past
To which I can reflect to make them last.

I want to be among **people** who are **kind**
It is in their presence where I usually find
The very same qualities I saw in my wife
As we both tried to lead a satisfying life.

I **cherish** the memories that begin to unfold
When I read through my journal and if truth be told
There is richness in what I read on each page
As the years went by - age after age.

I don't believe any one religion or entities
Have **THE** answer for most of life's complexities.
We need **Free Thinking** individuals who don't cower
To dictates of those currently in power.

A Stitch in Time (continued)

**There is no magic response to one's grief
Yet we **manage things** for occasional relief
From its connection with a love that's lost.
It's a reminder of what being human cost.**

**Realizations of the Past cause me to wonder
About the wisdom we find in our younger
Days that is refined upon further reflection
In our days of current inspection.**

Life's **lessons result in asking better questions.
The answers often appear as mere suggestions
To the challenges that can come our way.
What comes next? No one can say.**

A **clever caregiver offers their proactive assistance
To daily challenges as the dementia experience
Continues to decrease a loved one's abilities
And alters their perceptions of ongoing realities.**

There is a **wide range of emotion
When I think of Marsha's transition
Outside her physical body into an unknown space
Void of time but rich with grace.**

Our emotional wounds do take time to **heal
But they leave scars to remind us to feel
The importance of a loved one's absence
Especially in the quietude of silence.**

Responding to the Writing Prompt

PROFILE

I decided that I would develop a profile using her first name as the point of focus: MARSHA. I looked for items around the house that connected with aspects of my memories of activities and events that meant a great deal to both of us. I included items that formed each letter and then wrote lines of verse for each letter.

A Profile of

M - A - R - S - H - A

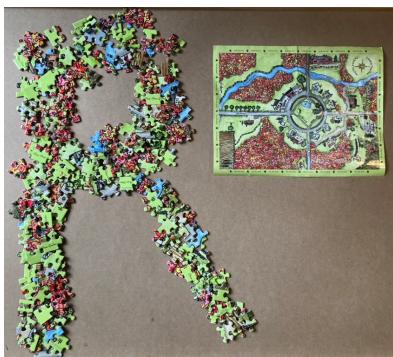




**Looking around the room I see traces of you.
You are gone, of course, but out of the blue
An item surfaces from its hiding place
To occupy a significant space
In my ongoing work of art.
You will always be a part
Of my future days and nights
Especially, when I welcome the sights
Of mementos to remember
Our years of being together.**



I mindfully **BREATHE in and think about
How I admired your **COURAGE** – I have no doubt
I will always remember your beautiful **SMILE**
And all the **LOVE** you gave me while
Seeking **BALANCE** in all phases of your life.
THANK YOU for being such a wonderful wife.
BELIEVE me for what I say is true,
I owe all my **SUCCESS** mainly to you.
I felt **GRATITUDE** each and every year.
I felt **PEACE** whenever you were near.**



**I recently read "The Black Wolf" – Book #20
From novelist extraordinaire, Louise Penny.
I am reminded of the year 2024
When I read 19 of her books and discovered more
Adventures of the characters in each mystery
And to also read about her own caregiving history.
This jigsaw puzzle depicts the village of Three Pines
Where the plot of Penny's books unwind
And they allowed me time to decompress
To alleviate some of my caregiving stress.**



You were a collector of mugs for coffee and tea.
Our grandson's photo was plain to see
On yearly mugs that you held dear
As you thought of him throughout the year.
Our kitchen cupboards were the place
Where each of your cups had their special space.
While shopping one day as we were about to depart,
“I Get Crabby in the Morning” ended up in your cart.
I don't think you knew what the words did mean
But it added some humor to our daily routine.



You loved going outside to tend to your flowers.
The daylilies were your favorite amid the hours
Of many days when you watched them grow
And shine bright yellow in the afternoon glow
From our favorite spot
On our backyard deck and caught
A look at the birds who flew
Within our sight. They knew
The affection I felt in my heart
Every morning as each day did start.



Christmas was always a special time of year.
Presents were opened amid good cheer.
“Save the bows,” we could hear you say.
“I'll use them again, next Christmas day!”
Ornaments flourished on each year's tree
Often a new one found a new place to be
To mark an event of special note
And underneath each one Marsha wrote
A name and date to remind us next year
Of why that ornament was held so dear.