

On the Path of a Perfecting Care Partner

Looking at Retirement from Two
Different Perspectives

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Ernie Pancsofar

Date of Retirement
08/15/21

REFRESHMENT
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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 a care partner 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 Care Partner 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 Care Partner 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 Care Partner 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 Care Partner 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 Care Partner 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 Care Partner 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 Care Partner 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 Care Partner 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 Care Partner 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 Care Partner 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.