

A letter to VNA from a Loving Wife

This past February, my husband of almost 35 years passed away after a very long illness of both Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. Gerald had been a very active person with a heart for mission trips and service to our Lord in any way he could.

He accomplished this for many years through prison ministries, mission efforts both in and out of the country, one-on-one mentoring, and long distance biking raising funds for a ministry. Aside from this, he also was an avid tennis player, yet in April of 1999, I first noticed some tremors in his hands and had thought it just a nervous twitch; however they began to increase along with significant memory issues. With time other things became evident, indicating major problems. Through a series of testing his primary care doctor told me he thought he had Alzheimer's and Parkinson's and sent him to a neurologist who confirmed it.

Through a neighbor I found out about some wonderful Alzheimer's/Parkinson's groups and as I took him every week, he really enjoyed them but continued to decline.

Through a friend's daughter who works with VNA in Dallas, and who sent me an excellent information packet all about this group, shortly thereafter, Gerald's doctor ordered the McKinney VNA group to take over his care at home. What a God-send this was for both Gerald and me!!

From the very beginning, it was an answer to prayer as I was reaching a point where he became too much for me to handle alone and the assigned group really took over. Martha's wonderful attentiveness to his daily medical needs and abundance of supplies for his frequent wounds and skin tearings were applied with utmost tenderness. Carlos and others gave excellent--and I might say "very patient" care for his bathing/shaving/toiletry needs which really helped me a lot as there was some resistance to my getting it all done-- probably because I could not master it as quickly and efficiently as they could. I appreciated as well the physical therapists who gave his limbs a great workout and the doctor's visits. They all amazed me with their gentle care and took all the time needed to doctor him, clean him up, make him as comfortable as possible and relieve me of it all.

Of special help spiritually were Mark--the chaplain's very frequent visits, wonderful times of communication, and heartfelt prayers on our behalf, and Jenna's frequent visits as well which gave me the opportunity to discuss all that was needed. To both of them, I especially appreciate their listening hearts, encouragement in so many ways, advice and answers to all my questions, and peace knowing I could call them at any time when I needed them.

As Gerald further declined, they provided a walker, then a wheelchair, and graciously began to "hint" along with our kids, that time was near for a skilled nursing facility and provided the needed information and meeting to discuss that next step, and a decision was made. Gerald's last two weeks were in an excellent facility only 10 minutes from home which allowed me much time with him to the end. Then amazingly, the entire VNA team continued to come there and care for his needs--and mine, until the Lord called him home on Feb. 6.

I realize in looking back that I had been somewhat in denial that the end was near, but the kind, patient, loving care and concern and gentle prompting toward the last steps, by each one of you, has left me with a forever gratitude to the VNA magnificent McKinney team for standing with us the whole way. Thanks with all my heart!

*As the saying goes--each of you are "priceless"!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Jeannette Hooker*