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Health & Fitness

Finding the Joy in Alzheimer's: Caregivers Share the Joyful Times
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North Star Books
978-0-9632752-2-6
(May 31, 2002)

Alzheimer’s is a debilitating disease that confuses orientation and strangles communication in an estimated twelve million people worldwide. The author, a caregiver of her ninety-year-old father until he died early in 2001, and an author of six books, assembles a kaleidoscope of thirty-eight stories from caregivers to stir hope, compassion, and joy in the daily moments of people who live with the disease. This compilation comes directly from the hearts of couples, children, grandchildren, siblings, and friends.

Smiles cannot be suppressed in the story, “Don’t Eat the Yellow and Green Ones.” An adult child of a woman with Alzheimer’s takes a vacation and tosses in her suitcase a bag of yellow, green, white, and orange earplugs for comfort when others snore. “The first morning, as we were waking up, my little mama sat on the side of the bed, grabbed the bag of ear plugs, and reached in - ‘Can’t I have some of this candy?’ ” Mama can’t remember from one day to the next that these are not marshmallows. Finally, all efforts to stop her from eating them fail: Mama pops a few in her mouth, then walks to the sink to spit them out! The message connects, and the problem is solved.

Some stories bring tears. On one author’s father’s ninetieth birthday, people gather at the Alzheimer’s center to celebrate. The author is deeply saddened that the father with a once booming, melodic voice can’t join in any of the singing. Someone starts one of the man’s favorite old love songs, “Let Me Call You Sweetheart.” “There is real power in the music in our lives … something dramatic when words and melodies mingle in our mind - freezing moments in time. Never to be forgotten.”

“A Prayer Answered” shows the surprises in reaching through to an Alzheimer’s victim. Donald still wanted to be part of everyday life. Micael, a sad little boy without a father, needed someone too. Somehow Donald felt the sadness and connected with Micael. The boy started to chat about everything, brought out all his toys for review, and even leaned against Donald’s

knee.

Avadian has selected stories that fill the heart with joy, laughter, hope, and understanding of the essence of living with Alzheimer's.