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Health & Fitness

Where's My Shoes? My Father's Walk Through Alzheimer's
Brenda Avadian
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Avadian's poignant and touching story is "real" in every sense of the word. She avoids the dry, formal approach of a "how-to" book or a document filled with cold facts and draws the reader into her home to share a difficult journey with her father, herself and the disease of Alzheimer's. With family history, pages from her personal journal and details of the not-so-perfect relationship with her siblings, she invites the reader into the personal experience of caring for a parent with dementia. Avadian realistically shares not only her touching moments with her father, but also those of sadness and pain as she observes the slow decline of her father's mental well-being.

"Where's my shoes?" is the constant question asked by her father that becomes the sore spot of all frustration in the household. Avadian utilizes this question as a metaphor to emphasize the difficult realities of Alzheimer's. She is not afraid to be vulnerable in her book as she soul searches; talking about her feelings of being overwhelmed or resenting her own sacrifices in caring for her father. Described are the fears and panic that come with realizing one has become their parent's keeper. Feelings of betrayal then follow as it becomes necessary to legally take over the power of another life: financial affairs, daily decisions and medical treatment. All of this showing the constant struggle with the nagging question: Am I doing the right thing?

Even with such a painful topic there is relief as the author captures unforgettable moments. Avadian narrates, for example, the story of having to turn her father's mirrored, closet doors inside out so he would no longer be exacerbated by the man who mimics him. Another example is the elder Avadian upon his first night in a twenty-four hour care nursing facility escapes leading us in to another county.

Through out the book Avadian describes the slow declining changes in her father; from his move in Milwaukee to her home in California, from caring for him with only the help of her

husband to the admission into a nursing facility and from his being able to still maintain some of his own affairs to his inability to recognize his own daughter and son-in-law. Each step of the journey is a heart-wrenching one that is meticulously documented for all to understand.

The reader unfamiliar with Alzheimer's will come away educated and touched, and the reader who has experienced this disease first hand will feel reaffirmed and heard.