



By Carol Bradley Bursack, Minding Our Elders

Caregiving: A Legacy To Be Proud Of

Have you thought about what you'd want your obituary to say about you? I hadn't until I was recently asked to write an article on the topic. I enjoy a challenge and thought, "why not?" How would I want my life to be summed up after I'm gone? As I considered this article, the natural starting point for me was with my parents' obituaries, since I wrote them.

Each of my parents suffered a long slow decline, so I had plenty of time to ponder their lives and the words that could encapsulate who they were.

Dad's obituary was fairly easy to compose, though I needed to dig for some documentation. He'd gotten international awards in public health and had educational and work-related information that could have filled pages, but he was a humble man who rarely talked about work related accomplishments. Many people benefited from his kind heart and his generous personality, but the most important part of his life was his family. He was very proud of us all and he often told us so.

Mom's obituary was more difficult to write. I'd seen many obituaries where a wife was remembered mainly as an appendage of her husband. I was determined that Mom's obituary and funeral would be about her as a person, not principally as Dad's wife, and I believe I succeeded. I listed her expansive volunteer projects as well as her tireless work with children and told of her many years of caring for her elders.

For both of my parents, other accomplishments aside, it was their caring hearts and their work to help others that are their lasting legacy. I hope that I will deserve similar words when my time comes.

What would I like to be said about me?

I've been a drugstore store clerk, a military librarian, a university library staff member, a stay-at-home mom, a humor columnist, a news researcher/librarian, an author and an eldercare columnist. I've also been a caregiver for many people, elders and children alike. I imagine one day some of those things will be mentioned in my obituary. But, in the end, what matters most to me? What, ideally, would I want people to write about me after I'm gone?

I'd like to have them be able to honestly write that...



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