

The Transition to Memory Care *One Daughter's Perspective*

Hope's father, Ron, meant the world to her. But as she inched closer to Father's Day 2021, Hope realized that she would need to find new and different ways to honor her Dad, who was facing a difficult diagnosis. She stepped into her father's world and navigated him in a meaningful and beautiful way through the challenging course of Alzheimer's disease.



The thought of moving a parent can feel dishonoring. But you can honor and move your parent by taking time and exploring how to do it best!

Ron was diagnosed in 2020, amid the pandemic, making a complicated and isolating journey more difficult. The family navigated challenging behaviors including: memory loss, wandering, sun downers and preoccupation with work and social life. Hope gained valuable knowledge by participating in Care Consultations with Jennifer from the Alzheimer's Association. Hope received significant disease education to help her wrap her head around what was happening. She and Jennifer were able to brainstorm ways to try and meet her dad's needs with the hope that he would accept in-home help and eventual placement in a memory care facility. "I couldn't have done it without her (Jennifer). She helped me understand the severity of what was ahead. Wandering one time is a progression, not a one-time occurrence."



On Thanksgiving the family signed contracts for a memory care facility and a month later, her parents were moved in.

It was an impossible situation. Ron's condition was severe and was causing some significant safety risks for him as he lived at home. His wife had serious health concerns of her own. The time finally came to consider placement and much thought and careful planning went into making the transition successful. Hope loved her dad and incorporated many pieces of who he was into his new space and the plan for transition.

Hope knew her dad wouldn't go willingly and the difficult behaviors associated with his diagnosis made the situation uncertain. Hope devised a plan to use what her dad enjoyed and valued to engage and give him control in the move.

Ron enjoyed 'working' on his laptop and said he was a CEO. So, Hope created an invitation for a conference including an itinerary. She delivered it to Ron and wasn't surprised when he said it wouldn't be possible for him to attend. Hope employed family, friends and his home health aide in the plan to peak his interest. At the end of five days, Ron decided he would attend the conference.

The décor in Ron's new room at the memory care facility was strategically planned to resemble a hotel and incorporate elements appealing to Ron. The two red recliners in the living room were his favorite color. While white linens resembled a conference center hotel. Hope incorporated a desk for Ron's important work. It was so strategically set up, when Ron arrived he sat down at the desk and went to work. He didn't look up and said 'See you later' when they left the room.

This wasn't seamless, Ron did call asking to go home, but he was not angry about being there. Hope gifted Ron with thoughtful gifts allowing Ron to reminisce and share part of his story with the staff. One of those gifts was a book about Ron with family photos and a red cover and a framed photo of his dragster. Hope also placed mementos of Ron's wedding day on a collage board and a picture of his children on the back. Ron showed everyone and it gave him something to talk about, something to help him share who he was.



Itinerary for "Conference"



"It gave him a new story, his story."

Hope took a difficult diagnosis and made the best of it. She strategically and carefully planned out a scenario allowing her dad to maintain dignity and control in his transition to memory care. The patience and thought she put into her carefully laid plan, resulted in a successful and comfortable transition for Ron. As we celebrate Father's Day, we also celebrate this daughter who orchestrated a gift for her father that you won't find online or in any store. Hope gave Ron his story.

Author credit Shanon Brickner, MSN, RN