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## **GUEST POST 2 Reflections of a daughter**

**By Martha Archibald**

The Cycle of Life – Ride for dementia event has provided opportune reflection time of the past seven years, since my father's Alzheimer's disease diagnosis. This piece is a complement to John's and my mum, Clare's blogs about dementia.

Certain events stand out as key milestones of life, often dovetailing with family events. Many of these, my dad can no longer remember.

We had several family souls pass on - my husband Ken's father and mother passed in 2016 and 2018, respectively, with JoAnn having Parkinson's Dementia at the end of her life; my mum's two brothers passed over this period as well. Her older brother David died of Lewy Body Dementia in 2018. And three of our family pets passed.

Over the past seven years, our three boys became young men, now with careers and family/friends of their own. We've visited Mum and Dad often over the years, with different family members on various occasions. We'd always aim to have a family reunion every year and in the summer, although we've not met

as a full family through the pandemic lockdown. The past few years, I've been visiting at least twice a month for Sunday lunch.

One very memorable time I spent with my parents was our 2017 UK Easter visit; I hadn't been to Great Britain in 25 years! The trip got off to a rough start, with a delay of leaving Halifax. The key to travelling with Dad was to always leave plenty of time – add an hour or two! With the plane delay, Mum was flexible and accommodating with the change, finding a spot for Joel to lay down. The other thing Mum always has with them is extra clothes. I didn't like to think about this trip to the UK being Dad's last.

In November 2017, Ken and I visited the small country church that Mum and Dad attend quite often. We sat with Dad while Mum played the organ, I felt at peace being there with Dad. This is the sort of event that I cherish – time spent with my father.

In 2018 Mum travelled to the UK to visit family. John and I split up care for Dad over the week or so that she was gone. Mum left us with a notebook of things - foods - drinks - TV shows - that Dad liked and places he liked to visit or drive to. I enjoyed the regular patterns Dad had and we drove around checking things out, when we wanted to get out of the house. We had a lovely visit with the rug hooking lady in Petite Rivière. The owner there knew my father from church. Her rug hooking displays were colourful and joyful – pleasing to the eyes and the soul. A visit to the Lunenburg waterfront was a familiar scene we enjoyed. A visit down the river, with a stop at LaHave Bakery, for a treat, to enjoy while gazing at the beautiful shoreline of Crescent Beach. These were special times to just be with Dad.

All through these seven years of a wonderfully full and messy life my relationship with my father became more limited. Then with this last year and a half, COVID-19 pandemic restrictions have kept me away from visiting Dad.

In 2020-21 I gained my stride in Toastmasters, participating in speech contests, Toastmasters International learning sessions and took on the role of secretary. Our club reached distinguished level in June 2021. In Toastmasters, I crafted a storytelling speech about my father for a few speech contests (I'm hooked on these now!). In fact, several speeches have helped me to reflect more on what I value in my father and our relationship.

My father's inspirational values have guided me well through life. He is patient, calm, wise, and goes with the flow. He's led by example, teaching his family to become well adjusted, helpful citizens.

Joel Archibald had a chance meeting with my mother in 1964 aboard the steamship SS Cunard. He met Clare Partridge, travelling from the UK to Canada; they were headed to Montreal. Clare thought Joel looked like a pleasant young man to borrow a newspaper from, so she plucked up the courage and asked.

Joel's reply was *"you must join me for tea!"*

Joel has also been an inspiration to my siblings Alison and John. Alison shared this upon reading the first draft of my Toasmasters speech.

"He is a very humble man and I have been with him at times and seen how he is able to speak with ease and comfortably with just about anyone. He never seemed to treat people differently because of their "rank" or background. I also remember seeing him ...[tell a person on the phone]... that they were not being reasonable and that they would delay the conversation to a time when that person was more rational. After he hung up he turned and saw me and said hello in a voice that showed he was not controlled by his emotions of the previous moment. I was very impressed..."

Joel worked as a manager at Michelin Tire and he was a leader in the church he attended. Occasionally, he was asked to provide his wisdom about success in the larger community.

When I was 17, Dad spoke to the Lunenburg NSCC graduating class of 1983. His speech promoted the quality of excellence. His formula for success was expressed succinctly in an article in the local paper, written by Jennifer James.

"The surest way to earn excellence is to do a good job'. 'Consider the effects of your job on others. It's called being a team player.' Flexibility in attitude is essential in coping with constant changes in today's workplace. 'The one constant factor is change,'...'Accept it and take advantage of

it'...Nothing can guarantee success but finding a balance in life is important to give your body and mind a chance to recharge. Find hobbies and activities outside of work. We all need a balance to provide an outlet for frustration. 'Success will follow if you work at it'."

Joel is such a patient, kind wonderful gentle man. And he has a humorous side, still now.

A few months ago, I was wearing a double-bun hair style at a Sunday lunch at Mum and Dad's in Bridgewater. Joel is hard to understand now, yet I thought I heard him say, 'Gummi bear' or "Teddy Bear" and he was smiling and laughing...

Joel moved into a nursing home the end of February 2021.

Due to pandemic restrictions, I join John's visits with Dad in his pocket. John patches me in via video on his cell phone for a few minutes of precious face time and will continue to do so, until the restrictions are lifted.

I have the greatest respect for Dad and the character that he's demonstrated over the years. He always did his best, was considerate of others in his actions and words, was a valuable and flexible team player. He accepted what life threw at him, made the best of it and has enjoyed a successful life.

Our dad, Joel Archibald, is worthy of John's noble ride. As much as a challenge as it is to raise money, it starts first by opening our eyes, ears and minds, allowing us to become aware of the issues people with dementia have. The active approach of John's ride, focusing on the physical ride, is suitable. It's an analogy, perhaps, of how Dad feels at times inside himself, unable to communicate his thoughts.

Throughout the years I've relied on the internet as a source of references of how to communicate with my father. I have put a few links at the end of this post that others may find helpful.

As we navigate this dementia path together as a family and individually, I am reminded how helpful these stories of our experiences will be for those travelling

this path behind us. Your choices may be different than the ones my family chose. The important take-away to remember is that we are all loved and we are to love all.



References for communicating with people who have dementia:

<https://www.aplaceformom.com/caregiver-resources/articles/dementia-communication>

<https://dailycaring.com/15-helpful-dementia-communication-techniques/>

<https://www.linkedsenior.com/blog/2014/07/6-ways-to-successfully-communicate-non-verbally-with-dementia-residents/>

[How to Talk to Someone With Dementia](#)