

My Dad, The Hero

By Joanne Gleason

It has been a year now that my dad, Richard Giordano, 71 years old, passed away from Primary Progressive Aphasia. This illness struck him about 7 years ago. My mother was his primary care-taker. She was amazing. This illness was a torture chamber. He was slowly stripped of everything. His illness started with him slurring his speech, it soon progressed to him being completely non-verbal. Eventually, he lost all ability to talk and express himself. His mind was still sharp and he started to use small hand signals. Soon, his ability to do any large or small motor-skill activities deteriorated. Through all of this my mom was his caretaker.

My family helped in any way we could. They would come and stay with us and we all would pitch in to help mom. Through the years, as things got really bad my mom and dad were house bound and my mom hired care givers to help her. This was very expensive but extremely necessary. This disease was just heart wrenching. We were all sick. It had no boundaries. My mom kept saying we can make changes to help him as he progressed through this horrible illness.

She would buy special sippy cups; she had small balls for him to hold so his hands would not lock in a ball. She put ramps up so she could wheel him in and out of their home in a wheelchair. She would just adapt to any thing that would help him and keep him home not in a nursing home. Towards the end of my dad's illness, he lost all cognitive abilities. This made things even harder. My mom kept plugging along, she would do anything, and my husband would go to her house and stay and help her for weeks at a time. He was my dad's friend. By this time, our hearts were breaking. This illness was taking its toll on all of us. My brother, my sister and I and all 10 of his grandchildren were there supporting my mom and my dad the entire time.

As I look back, I know now that this illness brought us all together to help. I miss my dad every day with all my heart. But, I know he is in a better place and not suffering as he was here on earth. I could never forget him and I never will. He lives in my heart. When I have a bad day I say to my self, if my dad could do what he did every day, I can surely do any thing that comes my way. He taught me courage and termination.

I have the utmost respect for families going through this illness. If there is any way I can help in any way, please contact me. I am very willing to donate any time to help, or just talk with families going through this horrible illness. I have learned so much!