



Foreword

I have experienced the eldercare life from both sides. I've been a caregiver and a care receiver. In 1984, I retired from my college administration job at Metropolitan State College of Denver to move home to take care of my ailing father and mother. Today, at age 82, I am one of author Colleen Nicol's senior clients. The challenges I faced back then with my parents gave me valuable insights and a deep appreciation for the service Colleen and her colleagues provide.

When Dad, my mother's soul mate, died, she deteriorated steadily, both mentally and physically. I took care of Mother in our family home, the same house where I live today. She needed me 'round the clock, every day. She was in a wheel chair, and I remember one night she couldn't sleep and she wanted so badly to go for a ride or at least have some physical movement. So I pushed her back and forth through the dining room and into the living room. Back and forth, back and forth, at 2 in the morning.

In those days, there were no Colleen Nicols to come in for a day or a couple of hours to help me out. I do remember our family doctor sent a nurse over every day for a few weeks when he sensed I was at the breaking point.

It wasn't all bad, of course. I managed to take Mother on bus trips to shop and to our neighborhood drugstore soda fountain for a chocolate soda, her favorite. We always talked them into an extra scoop of ice cream for her. She was thrilled.

Mother was 98 when she died. When I look back, I sometimes wonder if I could have done a better job with her, but I know in my heart I did my best. I also know that it would have been much easier with Colleen around.

I first needed an in-home caregiver myself about eight years ago, when I fell during a walk around the block and cracked my knee and broke my baby finger. My sister and I found the senior care company Colleen works for in the Yellow Pages, and I've been using them and their services ever since, even though my breaks have long since healed. A caregiver is with me for a few hours every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. They help with some of the cooking and light housekeeping. They take me shopping, to doctor appointments, to my rehab sessions, to the bank and to the pharmacy. I don't know what I'd ever do without them. For starters, I've never driven, so I'd have to call cabs or take a bus.

I have my favorites, of course. Peggy has been with me almost since the beginning. She's my regular Wednesday and Friday caregiver; Colleen is Mondays.

When I saw Colleen walking up to my door on her first day with me a few years back, I knew this was going to be someone I'd like. And she was. She's a natural caregiver—she's always upbeat and cheerful. She never talks down to you; she never gets frustrated. And just like me, she loves to talk and listen. Sometimes we even talk on and on at the same time. Also, she knows where the thrift shops are in this town. I love to go browse the thrifts, and Colleen has found some amazing ones. She seems to sense what her clients like to do, and she enthusiastically makes it happen.

You'll understand what I mean about Colleen as you read her book. You'll get a sense of her personality, her dedication and her sense of humor. You'll also learn a lot about the caregiving help that is available; she tells you how to find it.

I'm very proud of Colleen and am so flattered to add a few words to her book. I look forward to our weekly time together. She is much more than a caregiver; she's a dear friend. Mother and Dad would have loved her.

—*Harriet Johnson*