

Dementia, by Stanley Loon

My mother is 95, in fact she will be 96 later this month, and she has dementia. She recognizes only a handful of people. Luckily her children are in this handful. Her memory of her lifetime is gone and her short-term memory is nonexistent. I am a layman and so I have no idea which part of her brain is functioning and which is not, so this short article is only how I spend time with her when I visit.

She has always loved singing and, as I have a terrible singing voice, I thank heavens for the internet. I go into You Tube or Spotify and I play a song she used to sing such as *Que sera sera*. The look on her face as she sings along with Doris Day is well worth it. I am pleased that I have a video of her singing it. I then play songs of other singers such as Frank Sinatra or Dean Martin or popular Hebrew songs and she always joins in.

Another thing she has loved doing, is crossword puzzles. Even today she gets great pleasure from them. Before I visit, I print out a quick clues puzzle from The Guardian and on my phone, I make a screenshot of the answers. Of course, the vast majority of clues I have to tell her the answer, but once or twice she will stun me by coming up with the answer. Even though I know the answers, I intentionally prolong the time to do the puzzle to make it feel like we are doing it for real. For example, for a number of clues, I shake my head and say "let us wait for some letters from other clues", or, I say "I have no idea, I will have to look that up in Google" and we go onto the next one. Amazingly, if she is reading the clue for, say, 16 Down, I will ask her "where is it?" and she will immediately point to 16 Down. She writes in all the answers. Although I do help with spelling, she is generally very good. After going through all the clues and have to start again, she reads a clue and looks at the puzzle and says "we've done that one" and she goes to the next one.

And so, the time passes but it is well worth spent.

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