

## 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, but luckily her children are in this handful. Her memory of her past life 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 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.

Another thing she likes, is, amazingly, crossword puzzles. 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. For example, she will read a clue and I say “it’s a big word, let us wait for some letters”, or, I say “No, 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. When we have finished reading all the clues and have to start again, she reads a clue and looks at the puzzle and I 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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