



Meet Dora Who Lives With Alzheimer's Disease

Dora Lawrence's story is like so many Americans living with Alzheimer's disease. She has lived a long and full life surrounded by family and friends, enjoying many hobbies and activities such as sewing, flower arranging, decorating her home, and at one time she even had her own ceramics workshop. Dora raised two boys in Nashville, Tenn., with her husband, Charles (better known as Bub), and worked at Baptist Hospital for many years. She cooked, cleaned and did all those things that mothers and wives are supposed to do. In early 2011, Dora's doctor diagnosed her with early stage Alzheimer's disease. She and Bub didn't share this news with the rest of her family because they didn't want to worry anyone. So it wasn't until April 2011, when her husband of 54 years died, that her family began to notice her Alzheimer's was progressing.

Dora was living alone for the first time in her life and during the next couple of years, her family found themselves being her primary caregivers. As the weeks and months passed, Dora began refusing to leave her house to go to the store or out for lunch with her family. She secluded herself in her bedroom with the lights off and curtains closed. Dora's physical health was deteriorating, which prompted many trips to her doctor to treat her diabetes and blood pressure. She was sometimes stumbling and teetering when she walked and wasn't eating well. She would get confused, walk around outside at night and call her son Jeff and daughter-in-law Celia, sometimes a dozen times a day asking repetitive questions. Her three grandchildren stopped wanting to spend time with her and it was painful for her entire family to see her so withdrawn and isolated when her life had never been that way before.

Her family has given us an inside glimpse at Dora's life before the disease with photos, shared their caregiver struggles and their decision to find Dora full-time care. After touring several senior living communities in the Nashville area, Jeff, Celia and Dora found Homewood at Brookmont Terrace and in July of 2013, Dora moved into the Brookdale community and entered the Crossings program, specially designed for people living in the early stage of Alzheimer's disease. Dora is back to enjoying some of things she has loved throughout her life, like flower arranging, and is socializing with others in the community. Her diet has improved and her family believes that the progression of her Alzheimer's has slowed down. With the peace of mind knowing that Dora is being well cared for and safe, Jeff and Celia are back to being family members rather than caregivers.