

## Essay on Experience with Dementia

I was raised by two very strong, influential women: my mom and grandmother. Mom, a single woman worked full time to support us, providing a great life. Grandma supported her by taking care of me - instead of daycare. I loved visiting and sleeping over at Grandma's. We would play cards, do puzzles, read, and watch 'The Sound of Music'.

Grandma moved in with us when we moved into a house. That was my family.

My grandma took me to figure skating practice often. Our routine was: hot cocoa, long practice hours in the freezing arena, and into Florida's heat. We grabbed Perkins for lunch so often the staff knew our order.

Then we had to stop. For some reason Mom didn't want Grandma driving anymore. I didn't understand and begged my grandma to take me to the skating rink, but we couldn't find it. We got lost 2 miles from home but made it back eventually. As difficult as it was for me, it was hard for Grandma to lose her independence and her favorite past time: driving.

I begged my mom for a dog, and we adopted a puppy as a companion for Grandma. We would go out on long walks, chatting about books, school, or our favorite show Bones.

While I was at school and my mom was at work, it became common for neighbors to find Grandma lost or worse, fallen. She continued to lose her independence and become dependent on us for activities of daily living.

This is what Mom did for a living. She's worked with older patients as an in-home caregiver, then came home to care for Grandma. I helped as care became physically demanding.

We had caregivers, but none matched Mom's expected level of care. It was difficult having so many changes. Fortunately, by the time I left for college we had a great one.

Everything changed when COVID hit and sent us home. Being home was a blessing in disguise but then it wasn't. My mom was diagnosed with stage four colon cancer. While caring for others, she failed to care for herself. I became Grandma's caregiver and Mom's nurse. Again, I watched an important strong woman lose her independence, Mom. It was difficult for her to give up the responsibility of caring for her mother.

It was difficult for me to pay bills, find a consistent companion for Grandma and carry out caring for Mom. We planned for Grandma to move in with my uncle. A week later Mom passed away.

I'm grateful that I am still able to visit Grandma and see her face light up with a smile. She may not remember my name, but I know she loves me. I'm thankful that Grandma didn't understand what was happening with Mom because she was always smiling and in good spirits. This helped make things be okay.