

## A Place for Mom, Part II

I've written previously about the fact that my 90 year old mother lives with my sister, Joyce, in her west suburban home. My agreement with my sister was that when she could no longer handle our mom for whatever reason, that I would begin the process of looking for an appropriate care situation for her. That phone call came two weeks ago. My professional demeanor went into gear as I assured my sister that I would find a nursing facility for mom that was close in proximity to our family members that still lived in the Chicago area. Since my mother is a devout Roman Catholic woman, I recalled a facility in Naperville owned and operated by an order of Carmelite sisters that had an excellent reputation.

Knowing intuitively that the best way to get an impression of a nursing facility is to arrive unannounced on a weekend, my two sisters and I trekked to Naperville and presented ourselves at the location and asked for a tour on a Sunday afternoon. I was pleased to discover that the facility was ready for interlopers like us. We were escorted around the nursing center by the Director of Food Service who told us that she was required to assume this responsibility a few times a year and give up her weekend. She was well prepared with an itinerary and a host of interesting pieces of information for us describing the departments and services that the facility had to offer. We began the tour in the chapel where the mass is celebrated every day and where the recitation of the rosary was on the activity calendar each morning. This was important to us.

The tour guide showed us places where we could visit, enjoy a meal together with mom, and relax in the outdoor patio and garden. After the formality of the tour, we were ushered into the office of the Administrator, Sister Jean. It was impressive that the senior executive was on duty on Sunday but also that she wanted to take the time to meet us and find out about our mother's medical condition and her care needs. She ended the interview with a warm hug for each of us – what a great way to close the sale!

All this was done without my mother's knowledge. So, we decided to go back and talk with her about what we had discovered. I was dreading this conversation but I knew, as the oldest child, that the responsibility fell to me to convince her that it was time for this change in her life. She actually received the news with a positive attitude and told me that she knew the time was coming when she would need to move out of my sister's house and allow her to resume her life as a daughter and shed the role of care giver.

We admitted mom to the senior residence yesterday and it couldn't have gone better. Our mother met a woman from the old neighborhood in Chicago who was a resident there and befriended another person who, like mom, was a lifelong Cubs fan. The process went well because we agreed in advance how we were going to handle this sensitive transition. Our mother

is in a place where she will thrive benefitting from increased socialization, attentive care and spiritual support.

My industry knowledge of long term care settings, what to look for in a nursing facility, and what steps to take were invaluable to our family. What I didn't anticipate was the emotional toll that this experience would take on me. I'm grateful for having experienced this from the perspective of a family member and can now offer advice and sensitive counsel to others who will need to provide for the care needs of their loved ones.