

## The Issue of Placement

**Below are two perspectives on placement that we found in other chapters' newsletters. Both have merit. Both are thought provoking. Neither is wrong. No wonder this decision is so difficult for families to make.**

### Living With Alzheimer's

*By Anonymous*

When I was first diagnosed with Alzheimer's, I tried to get on with life, but I felt totally depressed. This depression had as much to do with the recent death of my husband as my own diagnosis. One morning, much to my own surprise, I woke and told myself that this had to change. I decided I was going to get a pet. I had never owned a dog in my whole life, but I went down to the Humane Society and got a dog. Because I live alone, the dog is totally my responsibility. I have to walk the dog everyday, and I take care of him.

I also began visiting the Alzheimer's Association for support because my doctor suggested it. These days, when you go to the hospital, it seems you are only allowed a few minutes with your doctor. Anymore, you only go to the hospital to do the physical things, and you never get a chance to really talk about the disease itself. By visiting with the Alzheimer's Association staff and volunteers, I got the support I needed to stay positive in spite of my diagnosis.

To help keep thinking, I now read the newspaper everyday, and I try to do crossword puzzles, although I rarely finish them. I enjoy cooking using the microwave. I walk my dog two or three times a day. I love to garden, dig in the soil, and cut my flowers, trim back the bushes and all those sorts of things. It makes me feel like I'm being normal, and that I'm doing what I've always done. I know and love what I'm doing, and I don't have to worry if something is right or wrong. It's so nice to make beautiful things that I enjoy.

As for my family, I often fear that they worry about me too much. They don't want me to be alone. They are pushing really hard right now to place me in a retirement center, and each time I put them off. I just don't want to go at this point. I still feel fine, and I can't see that I'm going downhill.

However, when the time comes, my son and I have an agreement that he will keep me aware of everything he is doing. That is very, very important to me. I love him and appreciate him for being concerned. I told him that I would prefer to stay here, but he doesn't think we have enough money. As long as things are not done without me being aware of it, and as long as I'm involved, I'm fine.

While I complain, deep down I know that the support of a family is absolutely essential. However, there is a part of me (that) feels I have been able to hang on to more of my thinking skills precisely because I live alone. I think maybe sometimes people hover over you and want to do too much for you. By having a dog, doing chores, and taking part in activities I enjoy, I feel I have made changes for the better.

*Courtesy of the St. Louis Chapter*