

THE LAKESIDER

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Honoring Your Loved One's Life Experience

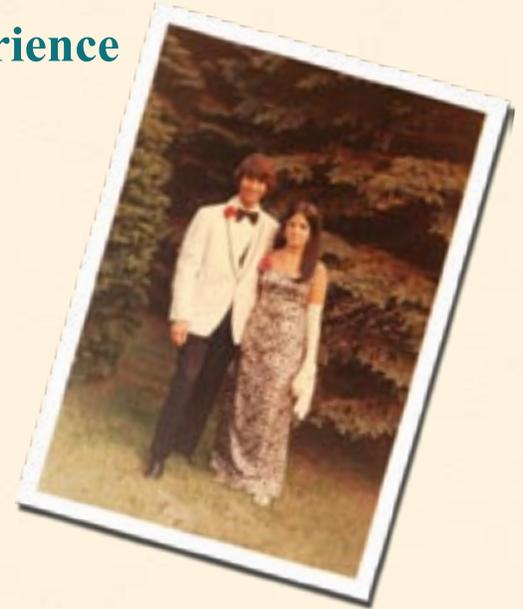
"I want my mom to be treated like the wonderful adult she is and was, despite her current circumstances" says Michael Sorenson, Rita's son. "I know that she's well cared for and safe at Lakeside Park, but even more important, I know she's respected for what she accomplished during her very long and productive life."

Honoring the lives of people with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia is the key to making communication less of a struggle. Lakeside Park residents include men and women who

succeeded in the important work of raising their families, breaking through racial and gender barriers, and many were "first" in their families to achieve educational and career goals. When their accomplishments are acknowledged, and their life experience honored, we gift them with the opportunity to become engaged and alive.

A detailed understanding of our residents' life stories through thoughtfully listening to family members and referring to the biographies they provide is an important first step for us. It allows our staff to respond to residents with unconditional love and respect, and to integrate the past into their present-day routines and activities.

Information and mementos illustrating important life stages—such as including items like



wedding pictures and travel scrapbooks – provide links that make it easier and more interesting for staff and visitors to reach out and engage with our residents. For example:

- Karilyn's room displays memorabilia from her time with The Ice Follies, highlighted with a poster of her and her twin sister in glittery costumes.
- Clif brought his golf trophies and putter to Lakeside Park, and almost always wears a golf hat and sweater.
- "Dr. Mac" proudly shows pictures of the bright red race car he built, and enjoys

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sharing model cars with his visiting grandnieces and nephews.

- Genevieve's bookshelf holds her military helmet and an empty shell casing from her service as a WAC during World War II.

Even non-verbal members of our community respond positively when we take the time to reminisce with them about their family history, careers, or participation in clubs or churches. The key here is to engage their senses, perhaps through touching a crocheted blanket, inhaling the smell of a leather keepsake box, or listening to music from earlier years.

"Lakeside Park staff knows the best place to look for solutions to current challenges is past experiences," says Rebecca Cockrill, Lakeside Park Executive Director.

For example, one resident who had had a successful military career was less than enthusiastic about personal hygiene. But when addressed



as "Sir," and told there would be a mustering of the troops he became willingly cooperative. And he related many stories about people and events during that rewarding time of his life.

People caring for loved ones with dementia, even at home, can adapt the following suggestions to honor a rich lifetime and make engagement with their loved ones as rewarding as possible:

- Plan for quiet, slow-paced time, when one-to-one conversation allows focused attention and engagement. Often just sitting and "being" together can be a precious gift to both of you.
- Stimulate memories with descriptions of people, places, and the events in conversation. Use mementos to cue a loved one's memory rather than asking if they "remember" specific facts and details.
- Try to keep up-to-date and interested in what your loved one is involved in now, no matter how different it is from past activities. Incorporating new interests into past memories and traditions can make the experience richer for everyone involved.

Honoring the experiences that create the fabric of a fully-lived life can create loving links between you and your family member, the past, and the present.



THE LAKESIDER

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Harold McGhee and Family Become Part of Lakeside Park

Harold arrived at Lakeside Park in Spring 2006. Since then, his sister Miss Jewell and his extended network of family and friends have been frequent visitors. Their cheer and good will contributes to the ambiance offered by Lakeside Park's residential setting.

In October, Harold celebrated his 93rd birthday with a Sunday dinner at Lakeside Park that was attended by seven members of his extended family. "I've lived a full life, done a little of everything," he said in response to birthday greetings from the staff and other residents.

Harold was born in East Oakland in 1913. Almost exactly a year later his sister Jewell was born. The two were pals while growing up and continue to be very close. Miss Jewell visits him Sundays after attending services at the North Oakland Baptist Church, where she and Harold are the oldest members of the congregation. It wouldn't be Sunday at Lakeside Park without the local newspapers Miss Jewell distributes to Harold and other residents, including the **Globe**, the **Sunday Morning News**, and the **Oakland Post**.

Harold attended Oakland's Lockwood Elementary School, and was in the first



Harold McGhee, surrounded by (from left to right) his sister Jewell, age 92, niece Judy, and younger sister Jean, age 86.

graduating class at Oakland's Castlemont High. He played football and baseball, and relished dramatics. "I really enjoyed that acting business," he says. "They used to have to just about pull me off the stage."

After high school, Harold left Oakland to work in the forests of California with the Civilian Conservation Corps. This public works program put over three million young men and adults to work in the United States during the Great Depression of the 1930s and 1940s.

"My CCC years were really good ones," he says. "I made \$30 a month for three years during the Depression and was able to send most of that money home." His work with the Corps instilled in him a life-long fondness for the outdoors. "I loved being out in the woods," he said. "For years afterward we went to Yosemite every summer often with two or three carloads of people."

The core group that made up these trips included Harold and his wife Rose,

and Jewell and her husband Fred. The attachment between brother and sister had embraced each other's spouses – in fact they were married on the same day. "Fred and I were going to be their witnesses, but by the time it came to getting married, they had convinced us that we should get married, too," says Miss Jewell. "We were all great friends and had so much fun and enjoyed so many happy times together."

Harold has been a dedicated member of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge for more than 70 years, and is a past Deputy Grand Master. His Lodge brothers visit him at Lakeside Park, and he attended the meeting at which the Lodge celebrated his birthday.

Another frequent guest is his niece Judy Cook. "We're all so happy we found Lakeside Park," she says. "He really likes it here. The atmosphere is so homey, and the activities keep his mind stimulated."





Ask Bonnie

Bonnie Bollwinkel is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and consultant with the Alzheimer's Association of Northern California. Bonnie facilitates Lakeside Park's monthly family support group.

Q What can I do to help the family enjoy the holidays – when my mom's ability to interact with others is so unpredictable?

A When dementia is involved, the best way to celebrate the holidays is to keep things simple, and remain flexible. Think about your expectations. Are they realistic? Are you trying to re-create "old times" and hoping that holiday events will "wake-up" your loved one? If so, you'll probably be disappointed.

People with dementia are usually unaware of the time of year, or holiday seasons. Although disconnected from the calendar, they still enjoy many rituals from the past.

- Something that connects the person with an old tradition may be the best way to celebrate. Sing a Christmas carol, read **The Night Before Christmas**, light a menorah, or make a simple holiday decoration together.

Know the level of participation and ability of the person with dementia. Whatever you can do to stimulate any of the five senses will help those with dementia to connect with the world around them.

- Some people may only be able to listen to holiday music or look at Christmas cards.
- Decorating Christmas cookies is an activity that's always fun and tasty!

It's important to understand that it's hard for people with dementia to participate in

holiday activities the way they used to. So focus on the holidays as a time for being together and showing love. May you be richly blessed this holiday season!

Family Support Group meetings are held on the first Thursday of every month from 6:30–8pm at Lakeside Park. The support group is a place where caregivers of folks with dementia can be frank and open about their concerns, questions, and feelings. There is no charge, and we provide light finger foods.



Holiday birthday cake by Anita Bohbot

October Memory Walk Team

On October 7, approximately 6,000 Northern Californians participated in the 13th Annual Memory Walk sponsored by the Alzheimer's Association. The walk was held on Treasure Island, and raised \$1 million for research, education, and support groups.

Lakeside Park staff, friends, and residents' families contributed \$1,006 represented by the 100 paper athletic shoes decorating our lobby to help conquer this disease.

New Aquarium Soothes Residents

Could tropical fish comfort your loved one? Researchers at Purdue University discovered that exposing people who have Alzheimer's to tanks of brightly-colored fish helped them relax. "Gliding fish often held peoples' attention for up to 30 minutes," reported Dr. Nancy Edwards, co-author of the Purdue study which showed a decrease in the occurrence and duration of behaviors including wandering, pacing, and shouting.

Other studies conducted over the past 25 years have shown that gazing at aquarium fish can effectively reduce stress levels. Participants in some studies had significantly lower blood pressure, which is often a problem for older people with Alzheimer's. Study participants also



AF Evans' Senior Vice President Bill McClure and Human Resources Vice President Margaret Calderon were among the 15 staff, residents' family members, and friends who walked for Lakeside Park.

Turquoise Lakeside Park team shirts are still available for only \$10. The money will go to the Alzheimer's Association. Please buy a shirt and start making plans to join us on next year's Memory Walk and picnic!

Since 1989, the Alzheimer's Association's Memory Walk has raised more than \$200 million in more than 600 communities nationwide.



Researchers at Purdue University have studied the therapeutic effects of aquarium fish on people with Alzheimer's.

reported it was easier to fall asleep and that they slept more soundly.

The new 120-gallon salt-water aquarium at Lakeside Park has met with such success, that one is being ordered for the first floor.

"The residents have reacted very positively," says Activity Coordinator Renata Doakes. "Many have their favorite fish, and return to the tank throughout the day to check on theirs."

The aquarium was specifically designed for Lakeside Park. It's tip-proof and features a locking top and unbreakable glass. It also has a special design to allow residents with vision impairments to see the fish more easily.

Aquarium therapy is one that can be replicated by those providing care for people with Alzheimer's or other types of dementia in their homes. And don't worry if you don't have a fish tank, or don't want to take care of one. Even watching a video or DVD of aquarium fish has been proven to have therapeutic effects!



Is It Time for a Care Community?

Are you trying to decide if it's the "right time" for your loved one to move to a residential care community? If so, we think you'll find **Moving a Relative with Memory Loss – A Family Caregiver's Guide** very helpful. Written by two professionals with long histories of working with family caregivers and dementia training programs, the booklet provides information that has been very valuable to others in similar circumstances.

Coping with the changes caused by Alzheimer's and

other dementia can be a very emotional issue – no matter what the stage of memory loss. Call Janet Thompson, Community Relations Director for Lakeside Park, 510-444-4684, to receive a **FREE** copy of **Moving a Relative with Memory Loss**, while supplies last.

Whether you're struggling with this decision, or simply have questions about caring for a person with Alzheimer's or other dementia, Janet can provide you with a wide range of information about local community resources,

including day care programs, support groups, and more.

You can also call to make an appointment to visit Lakeside Park, or just stop by when you're in the neighborhood. There is always someone available to show you around – seven days a week.



Alzheimer's & Dementia Care

468 Perkins Street
Oakland, CA 94610

FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP

Meets the first Thursday
of every month from
6:30–8pm.

Call **510-444-4684**
for more information.

No Charge