

Memories from the heart

By Jo McCormick

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For the narrative this month I am fast-forwarding to 2001, some 20 years later than the previous columns. By mid-2001 I was no longer activity director, but an activity aide. Directorship was a full-time position and because of several personal family circumstances I deemed it not possible to be “full-time.” However, I still had a strong desire to work for the residents of Golden Ours.

One thing became evident to me as my years as the director progressed. We had a group of residents, because of the ever-increasing number of dementia clients, who were “falling through the cracks” so to speak. Regular activities agitated them and they in turn disrupted activities designed for the more cognizant residents.

In 2002, with the support of administration and our staff, “Our Place” was born and moved into the “old” family room in the north hall of Golden Ours, right next to the Chapel. Activities there were geared to our resident visitor’s individual needs of expression. It was slowed down, low key involvement that suited both them and me to a “T.”

All activity of Our Place did not take place within the confines of that room. I utilized other appropriate areas to conduct my time with residents to make the time well-spent.

In those other settings I prompted memories from residents that came from their hearts—and coincidentally into mine.

One such memory-prompt-ed event happened in a very special coffee break. It produced much pleasure for Vivene and Lela and just as much for me. They remembered their “paper-hanging days.

This was paper hanging such as went onto the ceiling and walls of people’s homes. They had quite a business going hanging paper for themselves as well as others. Vivene “pasted” and Lela “hung.”

I never had done either, but the modern version of contact papering had me holler “uncle” more than once.

The one incident that brought them to tears of laughter was a job they were doing in Lela’s home. There was one area on a ceiling where paper just would not adhere at all. They were becoming quite frustrated when Lela came up with a solution. “We have to cover that place with a patch that will allow the paste to “hold on to” the paper applied to it.”

Now, with what could they patch? A chunk of Lela’s husband Frank’s overall legs was the solution! It worked perfectly with hardly a noticeable outline of the underlying patch.

They laughed as hard about it some 50-plus years later as they had the day it happened. Both ladies were residents of Golden Ours but in the “regular” scope of activities seldom had the opportunity to “get-together” one-on-one.

Albert Schweitzer said, “The purpose of human life is service—to show compassion for and have the will to serve others.”

The Golden Ours version of the “BIG BANG” theory will be coming your way next. Look out for any fall-out!
Jo