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Essay Submission

2007 NURSING STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP

My Most Memorable Resident

In addition to being a college student pursuing a Licensed Practical Nursing Degree, I am employed as a contingent environmental aid at Evangelical Home of Port Huron. I am often assigned one-on-one with residents suffering dementia related issues.

Recently, I was assigned to a new resident who was having a very difficult time adjusting to her new environment. Our first evening was not progressing well, she did not trust me, and she was very angry with her family for admitting her. The first three and a half hours of our companionship were extremely tense. I was exhausted trying to comfort her, and guided her into one of the intimate resident lounges, when I invited her to sit with me a few minutes so we could both rest. I gently handed her some fresh tissues for her tears, and turned the TV on to the Animal Planet, and soon we were making small talk about animals.

I engaged her in conversation about her unique name, which happened to be my mother's first name. As we sat, I asked her if she had any nice memories of her childhood that she would like to share.

She began telling me that she used to spend summers with her Grandparents in a tiny community called Snover, and that her Grandfather was pastor of the church there. My eyes bugged out in surprise. She didn't believe anyone would know where Snover was. I told her, not only do I know where Snover is, but that that was where my Mother grew up, and that I too, used to live there. A spark had been lit.

As I was leaving, she confided to me that when she first met me she didn't trust or like me, but after we got acquainted, she was so happy to find someone she could share her memories with. As I left her, I told her about a photo I was going to bring in to share with her.

When I arrived home, I located the box of family photos my deceased mother had left me. I recalled seeing a photo from my mother's old church in that box. The photo was the 1930 Sunday School Class of the church that this lady's grandfather pastored.

In the front row, of the photo, were my resident's Grandparents! I blew the photo up on the computer and took it in to her. I showed her the photo and asked if the photo looked familiar to her? She instantly lit up with, "That's my Grandfather and Grandmother!" I then pointed to two more people in the photo who were my Grandfather and Grandmother! I put the photo in a frame for her to keep near her bed. This remarkable photo has become a wonderful unifying spark between us. When she gets anxious, I pull out the photo and we can talk, it usually comforts her.

It is so rewarding to see her smile when I arrive on duty.