

My new nickname?

by Rev. Joe Dirt - Monday, January 16, 2023

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I don't remember exactly when my mother went into the nursing home, but it is pushing ten years that she has been in one or the other. Her health is reasonable, but she suffers from dementia, Alzheimer's to be specific. This September she will be ninety. The first half of her time in nursing homes she knew I was someone, but for the last several years she has had no clue who I am.

I do not visit her near as often as I should or would like to. I live in a suburb of St. Louis, and she is in a nursing home north of Tulsa. Even if I make a there and back trip it still involves a night in a hotel. Depending on her mood/status these visits last 20 to 40 or so minutes before she loses interest. It always feels like a long, expensive trip for a 30 minute presence in the room with my mother. Especially so when you consider that she will not remember five minutes after I left that I was even there, or even remembers when I last visited.

Frequently, to combat the feeling of a too short visit, we combine other activities with our visit, requiring another night's stay in a hotel. So a trip is a minimum of \$200, but frequently with the add-ons can run \$400 or \$500. Not a prohibitive amount of money, but also not something you want to be doing every month. But guilt and a sense of duty propel me down there 2 or 3 times a year. Fortunately, my four brothers are close by as well as some of my cousins, so she is not lacking for visitors. How is that for assuaging one's guilt a little?

This visit she seemed to be in a better mood than when we were there in July. Of course the first thing she uttered when we entered in the room was, "I want my mommy." She followed that by, "I want to go home." She has been doing this for a while now, but it still breaks my heart. Occasionally, she has some utterances that make sense, but even those dwindle down to gibberish rapidly. But she is real big on saying, "I love you." Apparently she says this to one and all, and that is not a bad thing.

On my first visit after they reopened the nursing home after COVID, I heard my mother use an off-color word for the first time in my life which I blogged about in [A Lighter Side of Alzheimer's???](#) Her use of this word was in describing me, and I probably deserved it. This time around she decided to give me a new nickname, for reasons absolutely unfathomable she called me a "*Boat Monkey*". I've been called worse. Again for reasons unfathomable she called *Señora*, "*Pretty Boy*." I am here to tell you *Señora* is pretty, but she is ALL woman. The thing with Alzheimer's is that you have to go with the flow.

I am glad my mother is receiving good care, and at the same time it is heartbreaking to see her in a

situation I can only describe as purgatory. Oh well, at least I did not see Dante and Virgil wandering the halls.

And so it goes,

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