



Caring For Nigel: Diary of a Wife Coping With Her Husband's Dementia

Eileen Murray

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At the age of sixty-nine Nigel Murray, a retired university lecturer and former Army officer, was diagnosed with dementia. Doctors suspected he was suffering with a rare and degenerative neurological disorder known as Multiple System Atrophy (MSA). However, Nigel also had many of the symptoms of both Parkinson's disease and Lewy Body dementia and an official diagnosis was never made.

For four years Nigel's wife, Eileen, kept a diary. This was her "safety valve" - an outlet for the daily stresses of caring for him at home, as his mental and physical health slowly deteriorated. In it she gives a frank and detailed account of his challenging and erratic behaviour, his bizarre hallucinations, the relentless struggle with his incontinence and the endless disturbed nights.

Even in her darkest moments, Eileen's dry Scottish humour shines through - you will laugh one moment and be moved the next. You can't help but smile at Nigel's trousers with the "appetite mechanism" and his special "anti-dandruff comb".

As the dementia advances, Nigel retreats into a busy world of army and lecturing duties, harking back to his earlier days. Eventually, the burden of running her own "one-woman nursing home" becomes too much for Eileen and her quest to find respite care begins. This presents challenges of its own. This true and touching account offers a unique insight into the day-to-day experience of caring for someone with dementia or a related illness.

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