

LEARNING TO AGE

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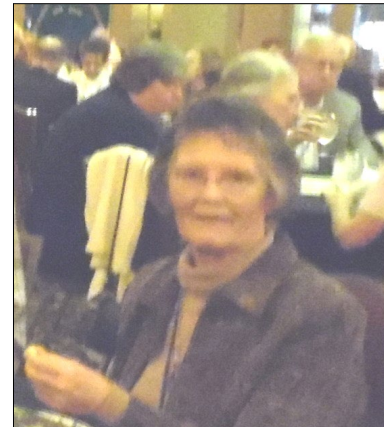
One day sitting in my home, I said to myself – I just can't do this any longer.

Within about a month, my home was sold and I moved to an apartment-type living, with everyone over 65 or disabled in some fashion. It is the smartest thing for me to do. No more concerns over what type of new roof, etc. etc.

There are 35 people here, on three floors. We have an elevator, open-air small porches, community room, laundry facilities, in-house mail delivery and garbage pick-up. The building was built 40 years ago, so doesn't have the small patios that are outside each room like the newer buildings. At that time, if they built two bedrooms with each unit, they would have to rent to families. (HUD housing). While children around might seem an advantage, they also bring "kids, cats, cars and cops."

Some people here rarely venture out of their rooms. Others use the community room for games and puzzles every day, along with coffee times, birthday recognitions, and meals, **DARLENE SHEPHERD** including every Sunday at 1 p.m. We take food for just ourselves, whatever we would have eaten alone in our room. Coffee times and the Sunday 'meal' usually last an hour and a half. We have our personal lock on our door, plus the outside doors are locked about 7 p.m.

Rent is extremely reasonable, even for we who pay full price; there are no utilities paid, there is a TV tower that supplies limited TV at no cost, and a bus stop just at the end of the sidewalk. There are fast-food places and grocery stores within a couple of blocks. A grocery store/pharmacy (Hy-Vee) will deliver meds, and we can call in groceries that are delivered for \$5.00. If needed, the delivery person will put the food away.



I considered town-house or condo. In each, when the front door is closed and locked, you are by yourself, with no diversions except self-centered ones such as TV or knitting, etc. I am a bit of an introvert and could have stayed in my home, and now my room, for a few days without talking to anyone. Here, I go down to get my mail and talk to people in the halls. I purposely go to the community room most nights and visit with others until 9 or 9:30, as opposed to dozing in front of the TV.

I often walk the halls for varying lengths of time or until my legs are tired. In my home, I would be walking from just one room to another.

If needed, therapists come here as directed/needed. I have good friends of people I would never have known, from my own home.

That kind of relays the other side of staying independent as long as possible. In 40+ years of nursing, about half of which was in a nursing facility, we admitted people whose family had enabled them to stay in their own home as long as possible. Even with the best intentions of family, this can result in contracture, limited mobility, poor hydration, and the need for more specialized observation for daily needs.

In one's own home, with the best of care, there is someone in the home for a given number of hours each day. That leaves quite a bit of time with no one around to provide any stimulation.

For myself, and for my overall health, being in a multiple-living situation is far healthier long-term than being in my own home. One has to scale down considerably, which I've done. And I still have more than I need. It had to be scaled down sooner or later, and this way I had control on what to keep and what to relinquish to others.

For what it's worth – it is a type of living that is not considered.

Blending the two groups seems to be a healthy, growing adventure. We look for miracles – sometimes forgetting that God's answer is always the miracle.

Peace to you and yours.

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