

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

My decision to proceed with a second edition of this book, almost two years following the release of *Living Through Transitions*, came after my father, Nathan Salsberg, passed away, on May 27, 2007. This edition is my way of honouring my father, and his determination to live life to the fullest, whatever obstacles or problems came his way. He was a great role model for my early transitions as I searched for opportunities to fulfill my own dreams. I wanted to salute his courage and striving for solutions until the end.

As I recalled Dad's shift from living independently to accepting his increasing physical limitations, I realized how, during his lifetime, he had helped his children and grandchildren to become more fully aware of the values he cherished.

Some memories of Dad's last year stand out for me. For example, he found he could no longer dial his family's telephone numbers because of his arthritic fingers. He was thrilled when we solved the problem by getting him a telephone with large buttons pre-programmed to reach us, each button lined up next to our pictures.

Dad, who was a custom tailor by profession, decided he did not want to keep some special suits and jackets from his wardrobe. But before offering them to members of the family, he told us what events he had made them for; he remembered every suit he'd made for himself and why he had made it.

Dad had always enjoyed meeting new people and sharing stories during the years he ran his business. His customers became very loyal, not only as suit-buyers but also as friends. When Dad became older and more infirm, I asked him to talk to social workers about his increasing frustration and sense of isolation and he agreed. The social workers listened attentively to his life stories and by doing this, gave him the gift of acknowledging that he had led a very interesting and fulfilling life. During some talks with them, he told stories he had not shared with his family before. He described his memories in vivid — and joyful — detail. He relished telling these tales because he loved to see people's reactions, especially his family's. Frequently, my husband and I were there when Dad talked about his life and history, so we were able to hear his important memories and share in his recollections.

As Dad's condition declined, he welcomed our invitations to take him and Mom out for a meal, a movie or even just window-shopping to see what was in fashion in clothing shops. He glowed from the special attention we paid on his birthday every October 30. February 2007 was especially memorable because Mom and Dad celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary with a toast of champagne to each other and their special marital partnership.

However, as he became increasingly infirm, each occasion felt like it was the last. During what turned out to be his final year, his determination did not flag, even though he became progressively more frail. Dad always faced his problems with creative and single-minded determination. At one point, a social worker arranged a place for him in a twice-weekly activity program for seniors. He enjoyed it for a few months, but eventually, he was no longer able to participate.

It was his increasing inability to figure things out that caused him the most distress. He gradually became incapable of reasoning through a problem. What comforted him the most was sharing whatever he had on his mind. I listened to what he wanted to say, but it was very difficult. I loved and respected my father, but my empathetic feelings sometimes made me feel I was

drowning with him in his loss of control. I was grateful to hear his thoughts, even though some of them were terribly hard for me to hear. Dad saw his life coming to an end, and he was philosophical in an attempt to comfort me. My true grieving began at this point, before he died. He was trying hard to help me be prepared, but of course, I did not want his life to end.

However, our shared experience — the fact that I was intimately involved in his last years — brought a deep calm to me when he died, even though, as my father, a part of me died with him.

Acknowledgements - Second Edition

This second edition provides me an opportunity to thank the people and organizations who supported Mom and Dad during their renewed life in assisted-living. Since September 2002, and their move to Forest Hill Place, Mom and Dad returned to a residential neighbourhood they loved and had left in the early 1980's. They bought their first home nearby when parts of Toronto north of Eglinton were covered in farmland. Mom and Dad purchased our newly built family home after I was born in 1948. I lived there for 22 years until I was married.

Dad charmed the staff at Forest Hill Place with his personal style. He truly appreciated all the support Mom was receiving as she adjusted to her life after her stroke. In their first years there, Dad pushed Mom in her wheelchair to activities and meals. Their routines were very similar, and yet they each found ways, with the compassionate and personal support of the staff, to continue to have time for their own privacy. I am grateful to everyone at Forest Hill Place who have nurtured and supported Mom and Dad over these past 5 years, and continue to enrich Mom's life.

I would also like to thank Pat Irwin who, through her personal service business called ElderCareCanada, helped to facilitate and co-ordinate many changes we made for Dad as he continued to need extra support services. Pat has been a remarkably creative and steady guide to our family, and a uniquely caring friend to me through my transitions.

The social workers and medical team from Baycrest supported Dad in an exceptionally professional and understanding way. I want to thank everyone who assisted Dad cope with his despair and frustration. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the caregivers from HomeStead CareProviders. Each one came with their hearts open to Mom and Dad, and made my life easier. I could not have managed to carry on without their daily support. My deepest appreciation to you all.