

“Do You Know How Grateful I Am?”

By Sherri Heider Wright

Dorothy knew the end was coming. Every day she lost something more—not tangible things, but abilities. The ability to shower herself. The ability to fix her own meals. The ability to walk to the bathroom without falling. The ability to unlock the back door and pick up the paper. The ability to write a note to a loved one.

Some things she hadn't lost yet, though. Her spunk. Her wit. Her gratitude. Because of that, being with Dorothy brought joy. Her home seemed to welcome guests from both sides of the veil.

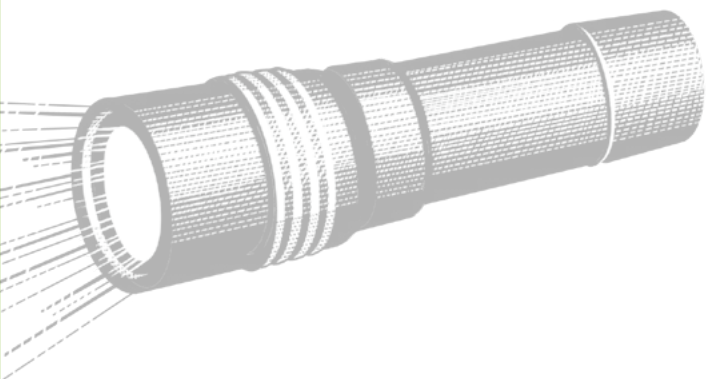
One night, I was the ward Relief Society guest staying with her—supposedly helping *her*. A spring storm arose, and the power went off about 11:00 p.m. We discovered the power was out when I tried to turn the lights on so I could help her to the bathroom. I flipped the switch, but nothing happened. Dorothy was prepared, however. She pulled a tiny flashlight from a pocket on her walker, and somehow with that meager light we managed to stumble down the hall. After the slow walk back to her chair, she smiled and said, “Do you know how grateful I am?”

The same night, about 12:30 a.m., something woke me. I heard the prompting: “Dorothy needs her portable oxygen.” I noticed that the bubbling of Dorothy's regular oxygen machine had stopped. The power was still off. I hurried to get her portable oxygen. I put it on her, trying not to wake her. As I placed the tubes around her face, she looked up and again said, “Do you know how grateful I am?”

Fortunately, when I texted our Relief Society president at 1:00 a.m., she answered. “The power isn't off at my house,” she said. “I'll call the power

One night while caring for an elderly sister, I learned a lifelong lesson about giving thanks.





company.” Her call must have done the trick, because at 1:30 a.m., trucks arrived and men began restoring electricity to Dorothy’s home. When she awoke at 2:30 a.m. to make another slow, flashlight-guided walk to the bathroom, she looked through the kitchen windows. She saw all the workers and said, “I hope they know how grateful I am.”

The workers left at 5:30 that morning, just as the battery ran out on her portable oxygen. But the lights were back on. After another slow trip to the bathroom, we saw that her regular oxygen machine was bubbling once again. I helped her safely settle back into her chair. Before she closed her eyes, she told me about three other visitors she had seen during the night—family members who had come to bring her comfort and peace. Then she whispered once again, “Do you know how grateful I am?”

I left Dorothy’s home at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday morning when another sister from our ward arrived to be with her. As I sat in my car, tears started to form. I felt such love for Dorothy, such thankfulness for the tender moments I had spent with her.

I found myself offering a prayer of thanks as her words came tumbling from my heart: “Heavenly Father, do *You* know how grateful *I* am?”

Even though Dorothy was advanced in age and in need of assistance, her simple example of gratitude blessed me that night. And it continues to bless me. Though she has passed on, I often find myself thinking, “Do people know how grateful I am?” And whenever I do, I try to express that gratitude. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

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