

Alzheimer Society

DURHAM REGION

Imagine, your own mother not being able to recall all of the wonderful memories you created together while growing up.

This is Catherine's reality, as she reminisces on all of the special times she has had with her mother and family over the years. "My mom loves people. She always makes a person smile."

Elsie grew up during the war in the UK. She was very independent. Eventually, she immigrated to Canada with her husband and three small children in tow. She has resided in Durham Region for many years. She devoted her life to her children as a stay at home mom. When Catherine and her two sisters were older, Elsie sold real estate and jewelry for a living. She loves to socialize and dance. Elsie has a zest for life and insists on living every moment.

Catherine remembers her always saying, "Go, live your life! Do what makes you happy!"

Catherine has a passion for scuba diving. She has travelled all over the world, leaving home for several weeks at a time and doing what makes her happy.

One day, she noticed her mom's forgetfulness. Later, she noticed her mom not keeping up with household chores. This was very unusual behavior for her. "It got to the point where my mom would meet me outside her apartment and not invite me in. Once, I noticed perishable groceries on the counter that appeared to have been there for several days. This is when I knew we had to get this checked out! Getting my mom to go to a doctor was tough, as she had not been to a doctor in over 20 years!" After a great deal of coaxing, Elsie finally completed the necessary health tests and they received a diagnosis

that would change both of their lives. **It was Alzheimer's disease.**

Catherine who once led a life of travel and adventure now needs to adjust to a new journey as does Elsie, who was once so independent; "She was bent on relying on no one!"

"Now the fear sets in. What is coming down the pipe? What will be the quality of my mom's life? How long will it take this disease to progress? What does she need? What if she gets lost? What about her finances? Where do I turn? How will we get through this?"

Catherine and Elsie were referred to the Alzheimer Society of Durham Region. Catherine was immediately able to access the help, information and support she needed to be able to best support her mom.

The Alzheimer Society of Durham Region provides individual, family and group support, educational workshops, recreational and social programs for people living with dementia and their care partners and more. Catherine says, "You receive specific training here. What to expect, the different stages of the dementia related illness, how to best communicate and lessons on financial planning are all part of what I learned at the Alzheimer Society."

"My advice to others is to have fun and let them be. Her life is a series of moments. It makes me smile to see her happy."

