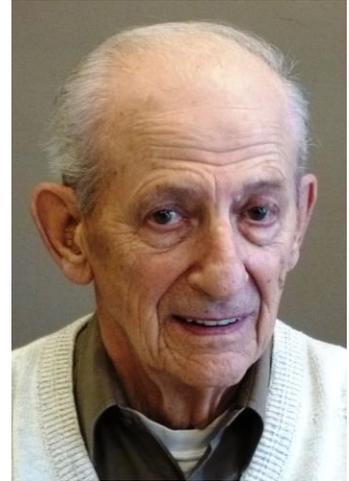


By John Testori

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to share my story about my dementia. Trembling fingers, forgetting dates, names, faces.

How did I arrive at this point? After some coaxing from my wife, I agreed to see the doctor. I thought it was only old age. After a couple of tests the doctor said I had a mild case of dementia. When I heard those results, all kinds of thoughts went through my mind. Did this mean that my life was over? Both my wife and I are very active. We enjoy biking, walking, camping, playing cards. I love to golf and work in the flowerbeds. Now after hearing this diagnosis, we both knew that we had to change our life style.



My dementia had started over a period of time and familiar faces at times became nameless. I tried to adapt by concentrating on their face, hairstyle, how they walked. My biggest problem was trying to carry on a conversation in a group.

I also have developed a bad habit of leaving lights on while going from room to room. Anne thinks we should buy shares in hydro!

Then on January 13, 2013 my wife Anne had a stroke which left her with some disability with her left leg and left eye. I became the caregiver, meaning that I had to be available to help her in the house, doing dishes, laundry, shopping, etc. I watched her at the stove. We had removed the controls so that only the front elements would work. I watched her when she used knives. Our families gave us a lot of support and brought us meals. I would sit with Anne at the kitchen table and help her with her hand exercises to help her regain movement lost by the stroke. Yes, there were days when I was angry and frustrated. But we survived them. However, I think it made us appreciate each other more, having gone through that time. Thankfully, Anne has now recovered almost completely from the stroke. We both help each other.

We have made a few changes in our life style but try to find ways to continue to do all the things we enjoy. I still drive, but Anne hasn't been able to drive since her stroke, so I do all the driving – doing the shopping and running errands, going to appointments and to visit family and friends.

We love to go camping, but now rather than driving far from home on a busy long weekend, we drive our camper van to the local KOA campground and still have fun! We both still play cards, with each other after dinner, and with our friends at the Legion once or twice a week. I find that sometimes I get "tripped up" on what card to play, but the people we play cards with are very kind and understanding. Most of them know I was diagnosed with dementia – and some of them have been, too. We respect each other.

In the good weather, I play golf once or twice a week. I guess I'm slowing down a bit. I now use a golf cart instead of walking around the course. I used to get confused when I was supposed to count my golf strokes, so now I use a counting device that my son got for me. I just click the counter after every stroke.

Sometimes we get mixed up about appointments or upcoming activities. So, we set up a big erasable white board on the kitchen door and write all our appointments on that - and remember to look at it every day. But sometimes I still get anxious that we're missing something so we phone to check or confirm our appointments.

I still cut the grass, go to the compost and keep up the flower beds but it might take me twice as long to do half as much as I used to.

I am currently still managing my own finances however in an effort to plan ahead we went to see our lawyer the other day and got things sorted out. It's important to do that while you can make those decisions. It's a big help, having a life partner. We help each other out, talk over upcoming appointments, what day it is, share memories ...

You may have to make a few changes in your life style, but keep on doing things you always liked to do – play golf, go camping – but maybe you have to do those things a little differently. Go camping, but choose a campground close to home; play golf but use a counter to keep track of the strokes and drive a golf cart instead of walking. I feel I am fortunate to still be driving a device that I find helpful when driving is a backup camera and my remote starter both of which my family has purchased for me. Yes changes are occurring and I am adapting to them as they come. When the time comes that I can't drive the car, perhaps an e-scooter or riding my bicycle will be an option!

Try to see the humour in your situation. Realize that dementia is a disease and can be treated. So think positive, and make the best of what you have.

Thank you.