

Male caregiver says women have it harder

George Stewart has nothing but sympathy for the women in his support group at the [Alzheimer Society of Windsor-Essex County](#) who take care of their husbands.

"They really have a hard time controlling the men -- even from the physical point of view. Men are bigger. And I think males are, well, a little difficult," says the retired University of Windsor law professor.

George remembers keenly the struggles of one woman in his group whose husband urinated everywhere but in the toilet.

"She would put him on the toilet and he wouldn't pee. She had to follow him around with a bucket and a bottle of Fantastic," recalls George, 70.

"I'm a typical male -- I don't know if I take orders well."

In fact, he says if it came down to a choice between him or his wife Carolyn getting Alzheimer's disease, it's probably best that she got it.

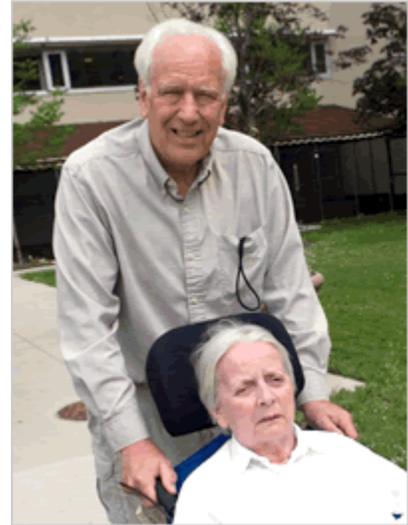
"If I got it, she would have a hell of a time," says George. "I'm big person. I'm 6 feet 2 and a half inches, 230 lbs. I'm a typical male -- I don't know if I take orders well."

George, who describes his wife as a kind and balanced person, says he's grateful that her personality didn't change, as it often does in those with Alzheimer's disease.

And so he was able to care for her at home from the time of her diagnosis in 2005 until 2008, when he realized he could no longer give her everything she needed.

Small mercies

Carolyn is now in a long-term care home and George visits her every day. While he and his wife were extremely close and he mourns her, he says he will always be glad that it wasn't the other way around.



"I wouldn't wish on her the anguish I've gone through and I'm going through," he says. "She's not unhappy and she laughs. That's the only communication really -- she'll chuckle and laugh."

The Alzheimer Society's [Early Detection Checklist](#) is a good way to keep track of early warning signs.

Photo (above): Glenn Ogilvie, Sarnia, ON.