

Gentle One

If you want to be amazed at the power of the human brain – even one challenged by Alzheimer’s disease – and have your heart melted in the process, just read on. Jon McPike, executive director of Garden Terrace Alzheimer’s Center of Excellence in Fort Worth, Texas, shared this story with me:

“Some time ago, our Life Enrichment Program was hosting a musical guest for our residents’ enjoyment. After awhile, the performer began to sing *How Great Thou Art*. Present at the program was a resident with advanced Alzheimer’s disease that no longer can formulate words or express her needs verbally. However, upon hearing the old hymn, she began singing, reciting each word, holding her head high as tears rolled down her cheeks.

“Across the room, another resident in the early stages of Alzheimer’s disease watched the drama unfold with a heavy heart for what was to come in her own life, but also for the dear lady she knew now singing from the deepest recesses of her heart. The observing resident retired to her room for the evening after the event, but unable to get the sight she had witnessed out of her memory, she wrote a poem about what she saw and requested it be given to the family of the singing resident.” Here it is:

Gentle One

*Those tatted, twisted tangles in your brain.
They breed the sadness in those eyes of blue,
Wreak damage, cause dementia, mental pain.
There is no mercy in the waste they do.*

*You sit almost immobile in your chair.
You must depend on others to be fed.
They give you baths and brush your gray hair.
They lift you out of bed.*

*I see that tear roll slowly down your cheek.
It’s your response to music soft and sweet.
You know what you hear but cannot speak.
No words come out right, no phrases neat.*

*Only death will free those snarls
And turn you loose.
I hope in dreams you’re free,
My gentle one.*

The poet is a published author. Her talent speaks for itself. We are grateful to Jon McPike for sharing this with us.

--Beecher Hunter