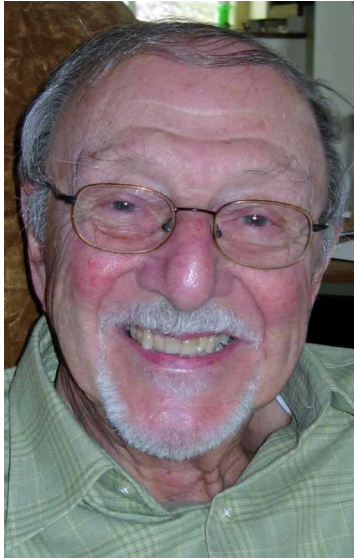


## Dick – Story of a Family Caregiver, Hartland



My name is Dick, and I was married to my wife, Georgette, for 55 years before she passed away last May. She was such an amazing woman, and full of life. It seemed she could do anything, but she especially loved sewing. She used to make all of my clothes.

Ironically, sewing was one of the first things Alzheimer's took away. She was working on a jacket for herself one day when she just couldn't remember how to do it anymore. That half-finished jacket was still hanging in our bedroom when she died.

I cared for Georgette throughout her eight-and-a-half year struggle with Alzheimer's disease. It's a terribly cruel disease. Early on, a nurse from Gould [Health Systems] came to the house for a long-term care assessment and basically told me

there was no money available to help us out. She gave me a list of available home care aides I could try to hire, but the closest one lived in Dexter – 18 miles away.

I hired the woman from Dexter, but on her first visit it became clear that she and Georgette were not going to work out, so I ended that quickly. I couldn't find anyone else who would come to Hartland for the job.

For a while I could take her to Senior Spectrum's adult day program in Skowhegan, but eventually she was too sick for that and I was caring for her largely on my own.

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It wasn't long before I ended up in the hospital with a bad case of pneumonia. I don't actually remember much about my time in the hospital, except that when I left a doctor told me that if I didn't find help with caring for Georgette I would be back again soon.

And I did find help – barely. Medicare paid for home health care for several weeks, but then I was on my own. An agency happened to have an aide with another client in the area who I paid to come in a few times a week to give Georgette a bath. In her last month she qualified for a hospice volunteer to come 3 times a week to bathe her, which was also helpful. Through Senior Spectrum I found a wonderful family caregiver support group that helped me realize I wasn't alone, even after she passed away.

In the early period of her illness, though – that's when I really could have used the help. If I'd had more options years ago; if I could have taken a break now and then when I was still full of anger and just coming to terms with the disease, that would have made a big difference, I think, both for me and for Georgette. It's just too hard to try to do this alone.

*To learn more about the Kennebec Valley Organization (KVO), and its campaign to improve long-term care for workers, consumers, and families in the Valley, contact us at 873-5844 or [kvo@gwi.net](mailto:kvo@gwi.net), or visit [www.kvorg.org](http://www.kvorg.org).*