

Caregivers are Special People



My wife, Becky, and I will celebrate 23 years of marriage this month. We will reminisce through memories of our steamy romance and the early years of our relationship. We will not celebrate that numbness in my right hand that has been there a long time, nor the tight feeling around my torso that started in the late 1990s, nor the fact that I stumbled a lot...

I saw the first doctor in the spring of 2000. Not quite two years later I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. I suspected that I had the progressive type, and that suspicion was confirmed. This is not relapsing-remitting MS. There is no treatment. I'm not getting better. In fact, I will get worse as time goes on. I told Becky to go have a life but she wouldn't hear of it. I know she was hurting then and I know it hurts her to see me struggle now, but she is strong. When I got my first assistive device, the mobility was liberating but my confidence and self-image were really hurting. Her strength helped me through that first trip. She opened the doors and cleared the obstacles as she has done for me now for 14 years.

Becky has never wavered in her caring support. An accessible home, a specially equipped van, a custom computer work station at home, a shower chair and a ceiling track system have become part of our daily lives – and she is the breadwinner. We live in a retirement community that provides endless opportunity to positively impact the lives of 100 or so seniors. I know all of our neighbors by name. I feel safe and secure here, and I know that is a load off of Becky's mind.

Becky works downtown; her commute is around 75 miles round trip. We get up at 5 a.m. because I need her help showering and dressing. We spend a few minutes together before she hits the morning rush at 7 or 7:30. She goes to work in the busy, high-stress corporate

world and comes home 11 hours later. Then it's time to fix dinner. She can't even eat in peace because she has to feed me. If we're lucky, we get a few moments of downtime before it all starts over again the next day.

The weekends are busy too because there's always something to do. We do what we have to do, and we hope there's time left over to relax and enjoy some fun together. We enjoy music, good friends and good restaurants as often as we can. And we both love Cardinal baseball. We don't miss a game on TV - unless we are there in person at 10-15 games each year, thanks to Becky's connections. And she fundraises! Becky has raised well over \$100,000 for the Gateway Area Challenge Walk MS - walking 500 miles in 10 consecutive events.

I know she gets tired. I can see it in her face and hear it in her voice. It breaks my heart. It takes a special person to care for someone with MS. I am needy. I hate it. Becky never, never, never makes me feel like a burden. She cares for me like no one else could. Sometimes I feel guilty. I wonder if I could do the same things for her if the situation was reversed.

Becky is so dedicated and so tirelessly giving. Caregivers are special people, and Becky is a special caregiver.

Just one last thought. Becky was in charge of a big corporate conference in Hawaii this spring. She could have buried herself in her work in the tropical paradise, but that's not my wife. Instead, she talked me into going. Imagine the challenges of getting me to Hawaii! Well she did it. Not only did she run the conference flawlessly, she made sure that I had an incredible experience as well.

I can't imagine life without my Becky. I tell her so all the time. If you have a caregiver, be sure to thank them and tell them - often - how much they mean to you. Not just this month, but as often as you can.

Editor's Note: For support as a carepartner, read the Society's [Guide for Support Partners](#).