

Becky Speaks . . .

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF CAREGIVING

MAC is missing!

One of the most frustrating things to happen is when you put something down – just for a second – and it disappears!

Logically we know this can't happen. We search high and low. We retrace our steps, and we start questioning our ability. WE KNOW when we had it, and where it was, yet for some unknown reason at that very moment... it is gone.

This happens all too often in my home. It has happened to me with a \$20 bill that I was positive that I put on my dresser. Actually I found it the next day in the pocket of the jeans I was wearing when I MEANT to empty my pockets and put it on the dresser. The mind is an amazing thing. We visualize what we intend to do, but if we don't do it, we are still convinced that we did what we remember. It is a scary event when it happens to us. *I can't imagine how frightening and frustrating it is* to begin developing Alzheimer's and know that something is amiss.

I have observed Mom on numerous occasions do just that, and worse. You have to laugh about it – or you cry. She has written a check and enclosed it *and a second blank check* into the pre-printed envelope with the invoice receipt. She had me hunting for 45 minutes for the missing check that day.

Another time she mailed three bills, and they all came back because she didn't sign any of the checks that she wrote out and enclosed.

Yet another time, I was helping her write checks to insure that they were done correctly after I had just balanced her checkbook, and she stamped, and sealed an envelope with NOTHING inside it.

She has misplaced her Medicare card (in her wallet) a half dozen times now since July.

She has misplaced a pair of white shoes in August that she swore she had worn in the rain that week and stuffed with paper to dry out... only to realize a few days later that the ones she wore were tan, and she had given me her white ones when she moved in with me in June.

Mom even misplaced a tan sock for several weeks, and I found it in the drawer with her bills. That was a time when I was looking to see what needed to be filed away, and I found three bills that had not yet been paid, mixed in with the ones that had been paid and were ready to be filed. It is scary.

When I showed them to her and told her I would write the checks for her, she said, "I have never been late on bills. Ever since I moved *here*, I don't know what is wrong." [*The blame game.*]

She has misplaced an envelope with Social Security papers in it, only for me to find it the next day.

One time she even misplaced her diamond engagement ring, but didn't know it. Sean was visiting, and he was playing with his cars on the floor in the den. He said "Look what I found GG!" Mom looked at it, and said "Go show Granny. It's probably hers." I don't even have a diamond ring, so that was outrageous. And when

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he brought it to me I immediately recognized it as hers and for the life of me couldn't understand how she sent him to me with it.

I walked back outside into the den and asked her why she had him give me her ring? She said "Are you sure it isn't yours?" I was blown away.

She said, "It isn't mine." And I said "Oh yes it is!" She went into her room, and looked around her dresser until I finally convinced her that it was her diamond. I was really worried then. She must have taken it off or it slipped off when she was on the love seat and it fell down by her feet. I guess she moved it aside when she stood up, and never realized it. Who knows how many days it was there... She had no idea.

Last **Friday** I went for a flu shot at the day clinic in the mall after work. It used to be my favorite day of the week. When I got home Mom was waving an insurance check at me that she received in the mail that day. It was like she won a lottery. Actually it was reimbursement for hospitalization on a policy that she has been paying \$27/month for YEARS, and I finally encouraged her to contact them about her last hospital stay in August to see if she was entitled to something back, and she was!

She asked if I had plans for that night, and since I didn't she wanted to take me out to dinner. Two of the three places that I suggested were unacceptable, and I knew why... no alcohol. It wasn't about the food, but she wanted a cocktail, and wouldn't get one at home.

After I changed my clothes we were ready to leave. Mom asked me if we could stop at the bank. "After all, it is Friday night, and they are probably still open until 6 or 7 pm." She still does not understand the bank, & the ATM and depositing/withdrawing from the electronic teller 24/7. I have explained it to her so many times, and she watches me as I complete transactions, but it is still confusing to her.

I told her on the way to the bank that I would deposit the check for her into her checking account, and I could withdraw whatever amount she wanted me to get for her. She handed me the endorsed check with a deposit slip. Once again I explained that with the ATM, there is no need for deposit slips as the envelope acts as one, and the receipt is your proof. She just shook her head in disgust.

When we pulled up at the bank she asked me if I needed her ATM card, and I answered that I could use either mine or hers as they are both linked to her accounts. She was more comfortable using hers since it rarely gets used except in Shop Rite and Walmart. (*Finally she has gotten the hang of Debit rather than writing checks at the counter...At least I think so!*)

Actually it is much easier and faster for her, and she doesn't need a photo ID to use her Debit card! That was one of her biggest gripes when she surrendered her drivers license. (*I can't imagine being the next person in line behind her at Shop Rite... I would be blowing a gasket!*)

So, while we were sitting behind another vehicle at the drive up so I filled out the deposit envelope while I waited. When it was our turn, I inserted her ATM card, keyed in the pin and began to make the deposit. She watched intently while she held her shoulder harness out away from her jacket. I said, "Why are you doing that?" Mom answered, "I HATE these things! They wrinkle your clothes." I have had that conversation with her a hundred times since 1970 and she still argues back. She would rather die with wrinkled clothes than walk into a restaurant with them because she was observing safety in her car.

(I keep thinking... *this time she understands.* – Not!) Once the envelope was inserted and the receipt came back I handed it to her and told her to hold it in her purse so that we could write it into her check book when we

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got home later. *(I had discovered that she has NOT been writing in every Debit purchase she has made, and so I print out the screen from my home PC and check it against her check register regularly so that she has an accurate balance for the first time in years.)*

Then I began the second part of the transaction because she wanted to ‘cash’ the check and have some of it for herself and to pay cash for dinner tonight. I told her that she could use her Debit card at the restaurant, and it would be the same thing, but that was a waste of time trying to explain it. She wanted cash, and that was fine with me. So, I got her ‘fast cash’ of \$60. The machine automatically gave me back her card, the receipt for the cash, and three \$20 bills. I handed them all to her as I drove out of the lane so as not to hold up the red mini-van that was behind us.

I repeated the part about holding onto that second receipt so that we could write it into her book, and she said “But I already have one.” Yikes. Calmly, I explained to her as if to a small child, “One was for the deposit, and one was for the cash we just got out.” Her answer was “**This is so stupid!**” I laughed and said, “No it is convenient, and simple.” She ignored me.

We were barely around the front of the bank and she said “Did you give me back my bank card?” I stepped on the brakes and said “Yes. I handed it to you with the cash and the second receipt.” She was holding the two receipts in her hand. Her purse was on her lap, and her wallet was lying on top of it. “Where is the cash mom?” I asked. She said “It is here”, and showed me where she put it into her purse. I said “Where do you usually keep your card?” And she showed me the empty sleeve from the bank. The card was gone, and we had only driven 25 feet!

No wonder she wiped out the drive-up teller in Newton Trust! There is too much to think about!

I wasn’t nervous... yet. I figured that it probably fell in her lap, or down between the seat and the console. I put the interior light on in the car so that I could see better. We were sitting in a dark parking lot in front of the bank. There was no card. Now I started second guessing myself, and thought “...*Maybe I left the card in the machine in my haste to get out of the way of the red van... maybe I just thought that I grabbed it and handed it to her...!*”

I said “Don’t move!”, and I put the car in park, opened my seat belt, my door, and got out quickly. I was trotting back to the drive-up window when the van was turning the corner toward me. It had only been seconds... maybe a minute. Maybe the mini-van driver might have seen the card in the slot when she pulled in right behind me, I hoped.

The woman was a mid-thirties mom with two kids in the back. I stood in front of her car, and waved pathetically. She still had her window down from her transaction. I asked, “Excuse me, but we may have left the ATM card in the machine when we drove off... did you see it when you pulled up??” She looked sad for me, and said, “No. There was no card there. You know, the card sucks it back in, if you don’t take it before the next vehicle. Maybe that was what happened... Sorry!” and then she slowly drove past me.

I felt pathetic and incompetent. I hate that! The woman’s face told me that she pitied me, but she didn’t know the half of it! My mind was racing. Now I was getting nervous. I thought I saw tellers inside, and it was still early enough that maybe I could run inside to leave Mom’s name. They could check out the machine and we could pick it up tomorrow.

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I wanted to drive around the back of the building for the main entrance, so I ran over to the car. “By any chance did you find it while I was gone?” I said hopeful she would say yes... Mom just shook her head, clutching the two receipts in one hand and the wallet in the other. She had a look on her face that could kill. *I know that she thought it was ALL MY FAULT. It made no sense to me. It was a stupid pain in the ass! How could it be lost in 25 feet from the ATM machine?*

I had *adgida!* I needed to go for dinner now like I needed a root canal!

Mom looked shaken and pissed, as if I had done something wrong. *Look at the mess you’ve gotten me into now Ollie!* was the thought that crossed my mind. I explained what we were going to do, and said “I want you to get out of the car in the light out back so that I can check the car thoroughly. I also want to look in your purse and your wallet one more time before I go inside and embarrass myself.” She hesitated.

The two interior lights were on as I looked through her purse and began looking through her wallet. BINGO! She had put the card into one of the credit card slots in the wallet. It was probably a sub-conscious move, since that is where all of her credit cards are. “I found it!” I shouted. “Thank God I didn’t go inside. I would have been mortified.”

Finally, my breath and my heart-rate began to return to normal. *(Although after this experience, I may NEVER be normal again!)*

She looked more indignant than grateful, and never said, *Thank you or thank God.* She was probably pissed at *someone* for making her confused and putting it away in the wrong place. Stupid machines!

All I could say as I smiled was “*Look out ole Mac he is back!*” from Mack the knife.

We drove down the street in silence to the Cambridge Inn, the local steak house/pub.

Since we were early we still had our choice of tables, and Mom chose a booth by a window. The waitress was brand new - first shift, first night. I told her we were going to be the easiest table she would ever have! She asked if she could start us off with a cocktail, and I ordered a Margarita. *(I wanted Straight Tequilla, but I was driving!!)* Mom mumbled a bit as if she had no idea what to order, and then in a flash of clarity said “I’ll take a Scotch Old Fashioned, made with water instead of club soda, and muddle the fruit.” The poor waitress couldn’t write that fast and nearly passed out from fear of getting it wrong. I smiled and repeated it slowly, and told her to relax and we were in no rush tonight.

Surprisingly dinner was pretty calm and social; the food was delicious; and Mom ordered a second drink when the dinner was delivered. She was toast by the time we had our coffee.

I helped her to the car like a guide dog to a blind person. With her age, the other patrons just thought she was very old! She was smiling like a social butterfly! It was very comical.

Within an hour after we got home, she was sound asleep sitting up on the couch with her **good** leather **bag** *(another chapter!)* on her lap and her ATM receipts in her hand! She must have had great intentions... I slipped them out of her hand and placed them in the checkbook on the dresser to balance later in the weekend.

I had the TV all to myself for a change! WOW!

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I didn't have to listen to mumble, babble, gossip or nonsense; I didn't have to watch the re-runs on the YES network, or Law and Order; didn't have to play Mad-Libs or Inspector Clouseau; I didn't have to play referee between Mom and Presley on the couch.

I relished in the peace and tranquility. *Maybe a few cocktails at night would knock her out early more often!!!
Yeah, that's the ticket!*

Here I sit, mentally and physically wiped out. It is only 9:30 pm. Remember the 'Good old days'? No more TGIF for me.

Fridays suck.