

Becky Speaks . . .

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF CAREGIVING

Ministrivia

Everyone knows what trivia is: it is the details; the finer points; the ins and outs of anything. Well then, 'ministrivia' are the details of the details, and the finer points of the finest points. The only time that these infinitesimal details are important, are during a CSI episode on television, or when writing to help the reader conjure up a mental picture that the words are trying to convey. Most of us are lucky to see the forest for the trees as we pass through it because our lives are so busy multi-tasking and simultaneously trying to keep all of the balls in the air like a circus juggler.

Then there are people who thrive on useless details. We all probably know someone that fits this description, and no matter how hard we try to look past that exhaustive personality trait, it is nearly impossible because each time you think that you can handle it, they slam you with another piece of useless information that causes you to pause and say 'who cares?' either to yourself or out loud.

The worst part about these types of people is that for them there is no inappropriate time for them to share this information with you. You can be in the john; deep into a great chapter in your favorite novel; watching the final 15 minutes of your favorite TV show; running the washing machine or the vacuum cleaner; you can be rushing out the front door, or trying to go to sleep. For these people the *ministrivia* is just about to burst open their skulls if they don't share it with someone, and if you happen to be nearby then you are the unwilling victim of their verbal assault.

Over time this wears you thin. It puts your nerves on end. It stretches your patience beyond your comprehension.

At times, I feel that as it happens to me, it is like a small dose of a toxic chemical that is seeping into my being one drip at a time. It is taking away precious seconds that I can never reclaim as my own. On the outside I am smiling and maybe nodding in understanding; yet on the *inside* I am screaming "STOP, PLEASE STOP! I DON'T CARE!"

I have very little 'disposable time'. I am either in action doing something, or totally exhausted and need to rest. I rarely have time that I wish to concede to just listening to idle blather. My mom sometimes reads articles out loud from a local newspaper containing news items that I have already been over-informed about by my television news on several occasions. She will follow me from room to room as I make beds, water plants, pick-up after myself, filling me in on 'what happened to who' as we move. There is no such thing as *new news* when you have a computer with news alerts set up to keep you informed in a timely manner.

She might see a coupon or an advertisement in a magazine which can spark a 15 minute dissertation on her friend Mary's daughter's husband! *Really!*

Mom even found it necessary one day to strike up a conversation as we were driving in the car about a sign outside a delicatessen which neither of us has **ever** gone into. We rarely even pass it, and it is not at all noteworthy.

<http://beckyspeaks.facesofalzheimers.org>

In Conjunction with www.FacesofAlzheimers.org

All Rights Reserved

“Wow, look at that. They are under New Management. I wonder why? Hmmm! Do you think they had violations?” I couldn’t even respond because it was such a waste of time, but I said “I don’t really know” anyway. She couldn’t let it drop, and persisted in conjuring up a list of possibilities, (mostly irrational and clearly unfounded) for why they changed management. Meanwhile I was thinking, *[Do I care?!]* That continued until a swan in a lake caught her eye, and then she was analyzing that out loud for the next 15 minutes.

One day last week we were walking quietly side by side through a parking lot pushing a cart when Mom said “That’s the car that used to pick up Corinne every day for training.”

I let it slide because in the world of ‘*Mom’s Mad Libs*’ that probably meant Driver Ed. Anything that has the phrase ‘used to’ in it, I classify as “Old News”, and it immediately gets dismissed and doesn’t dignify a response such as “Which car?” or “What kind of training?” It is simply old news.

As I attempted to load the packages into the car, she persisted with that line of conversation. “I remember seeing that car every day, but I never saw the man.” *[Still no response from me.]* It started up the “who cares?” voice inside my head. Yet, still she persisted further... “What was his name?” Now this time when I didn’t respond she got annoyed. She looked right at me and said... “You know! The man you worked with!”

Now I was totally confused. “Me? I worked with a man that gave Corinne Drivers Ed??” Now she was pissed at my stupidity. “No! Who said anything about Drivers Ed?” I replied, “Then what the heck are you talking about?” Once again she is pointing backward toward a huge parking lot which we have already exited and said “Back there... the white car...” My head was spinning. *There had to be 50 to a hundred white cars in that lot.* “What about the white car?” Now I am engaging in a conversation about nothing current or interesting with a woman who now is resorting to sign language to help me understand what she is trying to tell me.

My mind was drifting to the show of the future... “the Netters...a show about nothing” and I was brought back to the present by her next sentence: “You know, when you worked in Trenton...”

Since I have never worked in Trenton, but the closest place to that where I have been employed was in Princeton, I said “You mean Princeton?” She said “Yes!” as she was pointing out the window trying to indicate ‘that way, out there’.

Ouch! This was beginning to hurt my head. I was still trying to make Driver’s Ed sense out of this five minute root canal of my brain. She seemed to think that because I said “Princeton”, now I finally understood what she was talking about, but I didn’t. “When I worked for NexGen years ago?” I added. “Yeah, that’s the name!” Mom exclaimed. I had already lost the original point of this conversation if there was one.

“He didn’t drive Corinne anywhere.” I said, and she immediately jumped on me and said “No! Not Corinne... it was Lynda! ... when he was showing her the ropes.” Mom added, “It was a nice white car with a blue roof. I saw it every day.” At that point, I didn’t want to correct her and prolong this drilling any further, but I knew that it wasn’t every day, and it was sporadic at best. *[Useless ministrivia...]* I think the whole point was to let me know that she saw a car that was similar to my old bosses car, but instead it was lost in translation. *[I needed a nap after that long road to nowhere.]*

A funny thing about Senior Citizens is that they constantly confuse names. Mom calls Lynda – ‘Corinne’ and vice-versa. When she is talking to me about my brother, she says ‘your father’. She always calls

<http://beckyspeaks.facesofalzheimers.org>

In Conjunction with www.FacesofAlzheimers.org

All Rights Reserved

Kaitlyn – ‘Lynda’, and she calls Melissa – ‘Melinda’. She wrote ‘Kevin’ on the calendar for Sean’s birth date, and calls Sean either ‘Kevin’ or ‘the baby’. You really have to pay attention to follow where she is going with conversations sometimes because they are completely absurd at times.

She called me on the phone the other day at work to tell me that “I was watching TV, and ‘whose-ya-callit’ was on and he said that ‘your friend’ was coming back this year.”

I said, “What???” She said, “You know... the guy you like... that wasn’t coming back.” I was completely lost. I was running through politics, TV, rock bands and movies at warp speed and couldn’t make a connection about the ‘guy I like’.

I said, “Slow down and think about *who* said it Mom.” She answered slowly, “You know, the biggie guy.” (*I am thinking Fat now, still drawing blanks... yet it was important enough to call me on my cell phone at work.*) “What Biggie guy?” trying not to sound totally annoyed. She replied, “You know... he was getting fired too, but didn’t.”

I took a stab at sports and said, “Are you talking about the Yankees Mom?” She said “YES! Number 51! Your friend!!” [*Oh God, she remembered his jersey number, but not his name.*]

“Oh, OK, you mean Bernie Williams, right?” I answered. Then she asked me “What’s the big guys name?” “Steinbrenner” I said. She said, “No, not **him**... the younger one.” “Cashman?” “Yes! He was on TV and said Bernie is coming back this year.” So I said, “Well thanks for calling and telling me that Mom, I have to go take a conference call now. Talk to you later.”

As I hung up the phone I felt like I was run over by a bus. Work is much easier than this.