

CAREGIVING 101

Aunt Nora and Aunt Stella, sisters of my maternal grandmother, were wonderful role models, passing on their love for God and people. I moved in with them in 1969, thus beginning a long, loving relationship. Aunt Nora never married and Aunt Stella was a widow; her husband died in 1961 and her son and family lived out of state. After work and on week-ends, I helped buy their groceries; transported them to stores; doctors; helped with yard work; and listened intently when Aunt Nora would discuss the family tree. With Aunt Stella's family living out of state, mother and I were always available.

Coming in one afternoon, I found Aunt Nora on the bathroom floor. After calling 911 the ambulance arrived and Aunt Nora was immediately transported to the emergency room and it was determined she was anemic. Aunt Nora was proud of her age; 93 when she went to the hospital. Not too long after that, I had gone to a friend's home for supper and to watch a football game. Sitting in the den getting ready to watch the game I felt I needed to go home. Not know why but something was calling me home. When I walked in the house I heard a banging and found Aunt Stella in the bedroom lying on the floor. I again called 911 and she was in the hospital for about a week.

The aunts realized they were not physically able to come home and Mother and I started investigating nursing homes in the Knoxville area. We found a wonderful place and to our delight the administrator turned out to be a classmate of Mother's. They had been in junior and high school together.

Imagine their delight to be able to share the same room in the nursing home. I continued to visit my aunts on a daily basis. When it came time for a vacation, either Mother or I was always available. Realizing anything could happen at any time, Mother, Daddy, and I took separate vacations.

Aunt Nora loved people and it showed in her daily witnessing to God. She had that rare ability of seeing only the good in people. I recall one time while Aunt Nora was in the nursing home she was depressed and wanted to know why God didn't bring her home. I told her, "I can tell you why. When Mother or I come to visit, pouring out our frustrations and/or anger about various people, you quickly put us in our place." You say, "But look at all the positive things this person has done." Then you proceed to rattle off a list of their good deeds. So much for our irritation! ***Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*** Matt. 5:8-9

The highlight of Aunt Nora's stay in the nursing home was June 19, 1982. Invitations had been sent to family and friends to help celebrate Aunt Nora's one hundredth birthday. She was still as spry as ever and if she had been at home, she would have been outside working in the yard. Before their move to the nursing home, I remember overhearing my aunts talking one night; Aunt Stella was chastising Aunt Nora for

working so hard. "Nora, consider your age and come sit down." Aunt Nora, with hands on her hips, responded, "Stella, I am not going to sit down and die. I still have a lot of years left and I am going to enjoy every minute of it." After hearing that, I thought what better way for an older sister to put younger sister in her place. We were saddened when Aunt Stella died in early 1983, and Aunt Nora six months later in November, 1983.