

ALIVE WITH ALZHEIMER'S
Photographs by Cathy Stein Greenblat

**Excerpted from Cathy Greenblat, ALIVE WITH ALZHEIMER'S.
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More than 4 million Americans and more than 15 million people worldwide have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. They experience memory loss, confusion, and mood shifts. and they are often described as lost to their loved ones and to themselves. Cathy Greenblat's photographs offer a fresh and hopeful vision of what is possible. Taken at Silverado, a residential facility in southern California, they show that people with Alzheimer's remain very much alive when they are given quality care.

Silverado was created around a belief that residents with dementia can still experience quality of life by feeling productive, loved and needed and by being treated with dignity. Programs revolve around close and continuing contact with children, pets, and plants. Staff members are encouraged to bring their children to work; residents can enter with their pets; and dogs, cats, birds, fish and rabbits are present. Caregivers are highly trained in dementia care and behavioral interventions; they are warm and loving to the residents. There are many activities and weekly excursions for those able and interested in participating in them. The responses of residents to musical events and to the group and individual music therapy provided by Heather each Monday offer the most impressive evidence of the potential for high quality life despite Alzheimer's.

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1. LOSSES Alzheimer's "takes away" the people we love. Sometimes it becomes difficult or impossible to care for them at home. A placement decision is often made when safety issues arise.



Igor loves his son and is very proud of him, but sometimes he doesn't recognize him.



Ken took care of Liz during the first 10 years of her illness. Now he visits her every day at Silverado.



MaryLou has stopped eating, but Carole succeeds in feeding her mother some ice cream.



Edgar and Glenn are easily distressed when there is a lot of stimulation.

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2. KNOWLEDGEABLE, LOVING CARE Few institutional settings offer the quality of care we want for our loved ones, but Silverado is an exceptional model of life-enhancing care. Staff members with dementia training, who provide warm loving attention, are a key element



Kevin is a caregiver on the east wing. Carmella loves it when he calls her "Grandma".



Larissa is warm to all the residents, but she has a special affection for Ruthie.



Anna can't resist caressing the smooth cheek of Melissa, the daughter of one of the caregivers.



Meredith receives the assistance she needs to maintain her well dressed and elegant appearance. She was very stylish and happy at the July 4th party.

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3. PETS The regular presence of pets, not just “visiting” animals, can bring delight, comfort, relaxation, and stimulation. They are also a good topic of conversation.



Dorothy is always delighted when Stacey brings her dog Roxy to work with her.



Edith arrived from another institution where she was heavily medicated. She spent her first days at Silverado in bed where Cricket kept her company..



Sometimes Ruth fondles a cloth doll, but she is happier when she can pet Abby.



Edith arrived from another institution where she was heavily medicated. She spent her first days at Silverado in bed where Cricket kept her company..

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4. STIMULATION Stimulation is an essential ingredient of Alzheimer's care. In addition to entertainment and activities such as flower arranging, bingo, story hours, and exercise, weekly excursions allow residents who can participate in them to reconnect to places they used to enjoy.



Everyone loved the music at the July 4th party.



Barbara visits her friend Mary Mabel every Wednesday. She takes part in the activities and helps Mary Mabel recall her past.



An excursion to the local pool hall can be fun even when you don't remember the rules for playing pool.



Once the medications that kept her bedridden were reduced, Edith was able to take part in the excursion to the local racetrack. Her daughter went, too.

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5. MUSICAL MEMORY The memory of music and its pleasures seem to survive long after other memories have dimmed or been lost. It is thus a powerful tool in Alzheimer's care.



In the beauty parlor, Hilda looks lost, detached from her own image in the mirror.. She remembers little, including the location of her room at Silverado.



At the piano it is another story. Everyone is astonished at Hilda's musical talent and her musical repertoire of more than 300 songs.



Pat, the program director, reports: "When I begin to sing, they begin to dance, and we have a good time together".



At the piano it is another story. Everyone is astonished at Hilda's musical talent and her musical repertoire of more than 300 songs.

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6. MUSIC THERAPY A skilled music therapist like Heather Davidson can performer wonders, connecting to the minds and hearts of people with Alzheimer's.



Heather begins her day with a group session. Then she works individually with those who did not participate in it.



The West Wing group session always ends with a dance with Goldie.



Lars can no longer sing with Heather, but he wants to be part of the musical experience.



Helen can't deal with too much stimulation, so Heather quietly sings *a capella* with her.

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7. A LAST HOME Silverado is the last home for most residents, who do not have to go elsewhere when they become incapacitated or terminally ill. Rather, they can pass away in a loving environment, with dignity.



Arthur seemed very peaceful, sleeping on the couch. Three days later, he died.



Hanna is on hospice. She is too ill to join the group session, but she likes to sing her favorite song, "Sidewalks of New York", with Heather.



Carole begins to cry, knowing that there is little she can do except to hold MaryLou's hand, and express her love for her mother.



The good-bye song Heather sings to MaryLou is titled "Good journey, my friend".

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