

Rest in Peace

His desk calendar was at Monday, August 8. On Wednesday the 10th, the nursing staff administered a small dose of morphine to allay his growing anxiety. Hospice had been agreed to, but he had met only one or two of their staff. Thursday when he walked fully dressed, walker-in-hand, to his shower, he told the aide, Debbie, he was dying. She told him she loved him, and he said I love you, too. They hugged. And at 2 a.m. on Friday, August 12, they found him in his small bed, still, his face calm. No extraordinary measures were ordered.

Five weeks after his 101st birthday, Carl Abner stepped out of this dimension and embarked on a new adventure.

I meet the nurses who saw Dad through. I hear the stories of his final hours and days. There are tears in their eyes as well as mine; they cared for him, loved him over the three and a half years this was his home: a good home, a place of caring and respect, of enough space for the way he needed to live his life, and of not a little joy.

Who would have thought my father's move to a nursing home would become such a gift in so many ways? His

relinquishing the authority he'd wielded all his life. His relaxing into the routine. His comfort at being left alone. The freedom to do whatever he chose within the constraints of the place. He read the *Wilson Quarterly*, two newspapers, two news magazines, and the dictionary, always delighted to discover new meanings.

Here I discovered his deep shyness, his inability to hold two ideas in juxtaposition, his inability to imagine another scenario from the reality he experienced; and his great loyalty to my mother, his deep faith, his graciousness for all those who helped him through the day, and his gratefulness for my own regular weekly appearance at his side, listening, responding, asking questions, and—may I be frank?—getting acquainted.

His pastor once said of him, I have never met such a Lutheran conscience. I am not sure what that means, but I think it's a left-handed compliment. Maybe that's all the compliment any of us gets: an admiring on-looker, envious of the iron will, the constitution, and the sense of humor that gets any of us from 1904 to 2005, or 1942 to 2043, when I will reach his age.

My dad will rest in peace; he would have nothing less.
— Blessings from Catherine Fransson, August 19, 2005