

The North Fulton Marriage Newsletter

Volume 3 – February 2009

Sundown and Payday

I'm 36 years old. In 36 years I have made a lot of decisions, big decisions and small decisions. But no decision was harder than the one I had to make on January 12th, 2010. On that day I decided to have my father, John, Sr., involuntarily hospitalized for evaluation. My dad has dementia and it has continued to get worse over the past year; he had reached a point where he was a danger to himself and others (because of his driving). So, we went through the motions of having him admitted to the Ridgeview Institute for evaluation and stabilization. It was the right decision and the best thing for him, but it was gut-wrenching for me. I spoke with a life-long friend after we had dad hospitalized, and she said, "Wow, that will make you grow up fast." Yes it will. But now, two weeks later, we are thankful and blessed that we made this decision. I would like to thank Ridgeview for taking care of dad. Ridgeview was, and is, as advertised—they did a great job. Dad was on Ridgeview's older adult unit for about seven days before he was transitioned to a memory care facility. For now, his transition to the memory care facility is going smoothly and he is apparently adapting pretty well. The staff at his new home told me that the day he arrived he began to follow the maintenance director around and assist him with repairs at the facility. Dad loves tinkering and working on things, so this was awesome news. Also, he is a very sociable guy so I am confident he will adjust well and make lots of new friends.

My dad's behavior has been quite erratic over the past several months. One day he would be angry with me, the next day he would tell me how much he loved me. I have basically grown to accept that behavior as part of his disease. I must say though, I enjoy his kind behavior a lot more than his angry behavior. I got to visit him at Ridgeview once when he was down there, and I will never forget the visit. Though he is suffering, he still remains a father. When I arrived on the unit, he began to take me around to introduce me to all the other patients. He would put his arm around my neck and say, "This is my baby." God is good. Dad remains a husband too, though his relationship with my mother has drastically changed overnight. My mom is having a terribly difficult time with this transition. And with good reason—she has lived with the guy since she was 19. She has her own mental and physical issues, but she still loves dad. As she told me last night, "He is still my sweetie."

My dad was a contractor and quite simply a very hard worker. He spent the first half of his life working around mud, grease and heavy equipment. Even when he retired, he continued to work and tinker on one thing or the other. He was both obsessive and tireless. Anytime someone would ask my dad if he needed anything, his response would often be "sundown and payday." A response developed from endless days and years of construction work. You work that hard, for that long, all you really need I guess is for the sun to go down, to get paid and to go home. Makes sense. At this point in our lives, my dad and I have effectively switched roles. It is now my turn to look after him and make sure he is taken care of. My dad was not a perfect father; he made a lot of mistakes, but all in all he was a good dad. Moving forward I know I will make mistakes taking care of him, but all in all I hope I can be a good son. Dad, I know in this new phase of your life you may not get everything you want, but at the very least may you get what you need, including sundown and payday.

John H. Pruett, Jr., MS, EdS, NCC, LPC

Website: www.georgiaprofessionalcounselingcenter.com

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/johnhpruettjr

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/CounselorGA>

Facebook: <http://ow.ly/11PKG>

Email Subscription: marriagenewsletter@licensedtherapy.com

Georgia Professional Counseling Center, Inc.

602 Abbey Court, Alpharetta, GA 30004

Locations in Alpharetta & Peachtree City

Phone: 770-656-9711