

My husband and I met in the 60's when he was a finance major at Duke and I was a nursing student at UNC. Never would I have imagined in those days of growing old and caring for a husband with dementia. But that's exactly what has happened.

George has always had a kind, generous, and loving nature. He is a positive thinker, always. He wakes up each morning and says it's a beautiful day. If he hurts, or is scared of what's happening to him, he will say it could be worse. He expresses gratitude for the life he has had and still has. And he tells me often that he is grateful for me.

About five years ago he started showing signs of memory loss. He was subsequently diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment, and then Alzheimers.

His friends have mostly given up on calling and visiting. Our couple friends no longer invite us to join them. I am his anchor. Taking care of him has become my main purpose in life for now.

Everyone says to me I must take care of myself, but very few offer help so that I may do that.

I have a wonderful support group that meets in person twice a month. I try to go to exercise classes 6 mornings a week. I walk with George almost every day.

It is important to me to keep him home as long as I can take care of him here. We do not have long term care insurance and I don't know how long I will be financially and physically able to do that.

Respite care through ARC has allowed me to have some time for myself and peace of mind that George is getting some outside socialization and stimulation as well as strength and balance training. It has made a huge difference in my ability to cope with our situation so that I can continue to take care of him and me. One hundred forty hours is very helpful. We could always use more.

The funding of this program is critical for the many caregivers who are in similar situations to mine.