

## Pass It On®...

### Taking Care.

*How one woman turned a life of neglect into a lifetime of taking care of people.*

Life never really turns out the way we expect it to. We have dreams and expectations. And dream-come-true stories are everywhere — except, it may seem, in our own lives.

It would be easy for most of us to feel like we somehow got shorted in life. Not Barbara. As a child, Barbara never quite found the bond with her parents that all children need. Her father left the family early, and Barbara's mother worked menial jobs and jumped from marriage to marriage.

Barbara looked for stability in marriage herself, hoping a husband could share the load and fill in the empty spaces of her life. But soon after her son was born, her husband left, and Barbara now had two people to take care of on her own.

"I couldn't let my life keep me from caring about other people," she says. "Maybe it's unfair or just the way it turns out for people, but I still had a son."

Barbara raised her son the best she knew how and "he turned out pretty well," she says, smiling. And after the hard years of making ends meet and giving him a good start, she made a career change.

"I never thought I was supposed to feel sorry for myself," she says. "And I like people."

Barbara became an in-home caregiver for elderly people in their last year of life. She spends 10-hour days, six days a week, with people who have Alzheimer's disease and dementia, sometimes sleeping on their couch when they are afraid to spend a night alone. Most don't have families close by, and Barbara becomes the one person they rely on for everything: meals, bathing, bathroom duties, daily walks if they are capable, cognitive exercises like crossword puzzles and re-learning family faces.

She only charges what the family can afford and only works with one client at a time. "They become the family I never had, over and over again," she says, laughing.

The spaces left empty by Barbara's childhood are filled with memories shared with her from lives waning in the twilight. For 30 years, she has been making people feel good at a time when most would just be waiting to pass, alone and unnoticed. To see their faces when they are with Barbara, you'd think the last years were the best.

"I've found something I never had," Barbara says. "We make each other happy."

Family...[PassItOn.com](https://www.passiton.com)

By The Foundation for a Better Life®

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