



Construction G. & L. Geoffroy inc.
Entrepreneur Général



TESTIMONY OF A CAREGIVER AND LOVE

Love, Work, Courage and Resilience, Here is my story:

I have been in the employ of the family business, Construction G&L Geoffroy Inc. for the past 41 years, 25 years as President. I took over from my parents, and have succeeded in my professional life in this non-traditional career path. My company has won numerous prizes and recognition.

I am the oldest of three children in my family and by the age of 9 I had already realized the sufferings and non-verbalized needs for my family further to the disease which knocked on certain occasions at our home. I was given the gift of helpfulness and compassion.

In order to deliver this testimony, I dove into the large pool of my memories, happy memories and others...you know those that remind you of these immense internal sufferings and who, after a while, make you realize to what extent you journeyed, until you discover that you also have to take care of your own needs in order to remain standing, to thrive and to continue to support the one you love. This is what happened with my husband Jean-Guy.

I am at present in my second love life with my dear Jean-Guy, we had been a couple for five years when he received the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease in November 2009; the emotional shock is unforgettable. Two years before this diagnosis I knew that he was different, he no longer had the same judgment, he was disorientated when it came to time, his mood changed and this is what convinced me to take him to consult a specialist for his memory. I became the only caregiver for my love and I totally accepted my choice. I have a sharp sense of the duty and I made it, first, for our love and for us as a couple.

My first significant resource was the Alzheimer's Society Estrie (SAE), and in January 2010, I met with Mrs. Danielle Yergeau, family counselor to learn about Alzheimer's disease and the affects which it would have on our lives. After the diagnosis I thought that Jean-Guy would not recognize me anymore and I was afraid of losing him. I made the decision to keep him at home as long as possible, I accompanied him and supported him with the knowledge which I acquired - and that I still acquire - in the SAE in the three following ways: the support group with other close friends/caregivers where we share what we live, the KEY project and its individual meetings and the PASAD program where a companion came to our home a few hours a week for a duration of 8 months, my lover was stimulated and cheerful, he appreciated Linda's visits and her talents in diversified leisure activities.

Thanks to the medication taken at the beginning of his disease, we had numerous outings and trips and stimulation activities, which I sincerely believe prolonged his cognitive life by several years.

Although unpaid, but of major value, exercising the role of caregiver to someone so close, it is much more than life with its ups and downs, it is very demanding and it requires a lot of energy. In the course of five years I became his main landmark, his lighthouse, his memory, his security, a significant person around him, whom he knew that he could - and still can - count on, he still thanks me for being there for him and tells me: Lise, she knows where she is going! I was often warned not to exceed the limits of my task, but I did not listen, I was in denial and I believed that it would return such as it was at the beginning of our relationship. My priority was him, I wanted to save him. People asked me how Jean-Guy was. Few inquired how I was. I harnessed the strength and the solidity and I took care of charging our respective batteries so we did not get run-down.

After five years, I had to face the facts that his needs for care and for supervision had grown with the evolution of his disease. In 2014, after three non-decisive experiences for respite and my high level of exhaustion, I looked for the best place for his permanent accommodation and I found it. Jean-Guy moved to the Wales Home on December 26, 2014, a private CHSLD where the 'milieu de vie' is a priority, human values, quality care, an active lifestyle and above all my love can preserve his class, his dignity, his pride and his need to socialize. The staff and the Management of the Wales Home are constantly in solution mode to help him to adapt and to feel good. They also care about my well-being and I am reassured by their support. I know that I made the right choice of a residence

Jean-Guy is always my big love; our "involuntary" separation upset our lives at the same time. His departure from our house caused a large void in my life; I have experience a lot of sadness, anger and guilt.

It has been 4 months since he has moved; I am still participating in the support group. In spite of the distance which separates us, I am always his closest-caregiver. My work occupies me in the daytime and at 60 I am applying myself to make success in my life. If I could do it again, I would take exactly the same path with him. We still have more love for each other, he still knows who I am and in spite of Alzheimer's which has affected him for five years. I can confirm that:

The Heart is stronger than Alzheimer's!