

## **THE AUTHORS SHOW – Authors of Nonfiction**

### **Author: Charlotte Canion**

I became the **Accidental Expert on Parenting Parents** about 10 years ago, when my Father-in-law was diagnosed with dementia, my mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, while my father was in the early stages of Parkinson's disease. My husband was an only child and I am the only daughter. Nine out of ten caregivers are female. I have a brother who lived 3500 miles away from all the drama. So, with that being said my journey began as the role reversal cycle flooded into my life and consumed most of my waking hours. I began to journal through the day to day role of parenting my parents, as well as watching them evolve into my adult children, who needed more love and attention than you could have ever imagined. My book **"You Have To LAUGH To KEEP From CRYING / How To Parent Your Parents"** is a collection of stories of how I handled the weaving of three parents lives, who did not want to be a problem to anyone, much less their own children. I share my feelings as I laughed and cried my way into a state of "Oh my gosh what do I do next"? I treasure the memories of caring for the parents who once taught me to use a spoon. I have many stories in my book sharing the journey in and out of laughter and tears.

One of my stories is about how a World War II Vet (my dad, the Marine) became the adult/child who needed his steak cut.

Once a year my brother would come to Texas for a visit. His name is Bill and he lives in Juneau, Alaska. As far away from everyone as he could get and still be on the continent of North America. When he ventured coming state side it is always a big deal. It usually takes him about a day and a half to get from Juneau, Alaska to Dallas, Texas with lots of layovers.

Dad always looked forward to seeing his only son. When I told dad that Bill was coming to see him, dad would get real excited. He would immediately start making plans on what we could do when he got here. Dad was still able to walk, although it was very slow and each step was placed on the floor, one foot in front of the other. As many of us know, when we get older falling is a big fear. The concern of breaking a bone is almost assured if we fall. Due to this

concern, extreme caution was exercised each time he ventured out. And Dad could not venture out without my permission. I had Medical Power of Attorney.

Dad was in a nursing facility due to his history of violence. My dad was not a model patient, he could and would turn an any given moment. I remember other meals growing up, when a chicken leg or a glass of tea would go flying across the kitchen table, never really meaning to hit anyone, I think.

Dad had become friends with the nurses and ask them where would be a good place to go for dinner. Dad could leave the nursing home for short periods of time, under my supervision. But let me explain I am five feet tall and my dad was 6 foot tall. I never was alone with my Dad and I designed it that way. My husband or in this case my six foot, two inch tall brother would be my body guard, so to speak.

Rhonda and Wanda were his favorite nurses in the facility. I am not sure which one gave him the suggestion to go to the RANCHMAN'S STEAK HOUSE in Ponder, Texas. But that was the plan.

The RANCHMAN'S STEAK HOUSE is famous and well known for chicken fried steak. It is really a hole in the wall and has been in the same location for over six decades. Evelyn "Granny" Stack baked pies from scratch for over 34 years until her death. And they still use her recipes to this day and have the best pies and cobblers anywhere. The walls are covered with newspaper articles of movie and rodeo stars with autographed photos with the owners framed everywhere you look.

The restaurant was ten miles from the nursing home. So that was dad's plan when Bill came into town. When Bill got to Texas and rested after a long flight and travel layovers, we went out to see dad. We planned the outing to the RANCHMAN'S STEAK HOUSE for the next evening.

Dad dressed in slacks and a shirt rather than his normal jumpsuits. Dad was waiting for us at the door, like a puppy waiting for his owner to take him for a walk, if dad had a tail, I know it would have been wagging. He was happier than a tick on a dog.

It had probably been years since dad had eaten a good steak.

As I said the place was a small place with lots of nostalgia. We sat in a booth with Bill sitting next to our father.

We ordered three steaks and I had called ahead and ordered baked potatoes. (You always had to call ahead for baked potatoes, because they needed time to cook then in the oven.) They brought the steaks out and we all began to eat, but there was a problem... Dad did not have the coordination or strength to cut his steak. You see Parkinson's takes a toll on even the simplest of tasks. Dad was embarrassed. My brother asked if he could cut his steak for him. Dad nodded and said "Yes, please cut my steak". That was the last meal my brother ever had with our dad.

I share this story to show that you will learn everything that your parents did for you as a child, you could or will be doing for them. The lesson here is to show respect in how you handle the simplest of tasks, like helping your parents put on or tie their shoes or comb their hair. The parent has become the child, you must Love, Respect and have Patience.

**Remember all you will have left are Memories once your loved ones are gone, make them Cherished Memories.**