

## **Life is like a game of Snakes and Ladders**

Until 2010 Maureen had been lucky to have landed on more ladders than snakes. We were happy in our home on the Isle of Wight having moved here six years before and although the work was not finished there was no hurry we could plod along at our own pace. Maureen was enjoying pottery classes and a swim and chat at Norton Grange.

I will not go into any detail but looking back she had had her best years. And it's these years that I am trying to remember but her last year is still so large in my memory.

In September 2013 Maureen landed on the BIG Cancer snake and it took us both down. From September to November we had many visits to the hospital, chats and scans and more chats but it was not until we called 999 on 2 November that the cancer in the hips, pelvis and spine was confirmed and then two weeks later again calling 999 that any morphine was given.

This was silly the system was looking for a diagnosis and ignoring her pain.

Most of 2014 became routine. I became her full time carer and was pleased to help her in any way. She lived 24 hours a day in her recliner chair in the lounge. Looking out on the garden and seeing her birds.

Suzie, a carer came twice a week, two hours on Saturday to clean and one hour on Tuesday to sit with Maureen so I could go swimming.

I needed to be active for my own sake and would work on Wednesdays and Thursdays perhaps in the garden or the house always with my two way radio at hand so Maureen could call me if needed. My major work day was Saturday when Suzie was here. My aim was to help Maureen in any way that I could this also meant hiring in some work. The extended front step and the wet room were done in the first few months. Sometimes one job would affect another for instance, the wet room was good but wheel chair access was difficult with the pinch point by the tumble dryer and the big cupboard. So I took down the big cupboard and then had to find space to put the equipment found

I hope Maureen understood, she was always busy with something be it, Sudoku, cross stitch, TV, on the phone, writing notes and doodles or just watching her birds. She was not happy if I was away to the shops or chemist but knew that it had to be done. I became very tired and sometimes frustrated with the Doctors and Chemist and because I was not walking much my feet became very painful.

Summer was good with visits from the various grandchildren and news of the big wedding in August. A marked change in Maureen's condition occurred in September. She became very tired and less mobile. The plateau of the first half of the year became a noticeable decline.

In summary; from December 2013 to her death on Christmas day 2014 we both suffered a long and painful decline. Slow at first but very fast in that last month. A month that is still too big in my memory because I want to remember those good days and the bad days are so overpowering, all I can see is her in pain, it hurts me so much.

Terry Rawkins 30 January 2015