

# Moving Mother

by Barbara Swanson

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My Mother just celebrated her 90th Birthday at an open house for her family, friends and new neighbors. We moved her into the Chateau Brickyard Retirement Residence a month before her Birthday.

For two and a half years before the move, we struggled to keep her in her home, which is what she was determined to do. I have two younger sisters and between each of us, our families, church, neighbors and community help, we did as best we could. It still didn't totally meet her physical and emotional needs.

Mother had knee replacement surgery, hoping that she would become more mobile. This didn't happen. She fell several times. Sometime she would wear her medic alert necklace and other times she would forget. We had people live with her on three different occasions. It didn't work out. She stayed with my younger sister for three months, which also didn't work out. My husband and I spent two months with her and other family members took turns staying at night.

We found ourselves becoming physically and emotionally exhausted and

mother's needs were not being fully met. There were times when she had to be alone. She was not safe. She was not eating right and becoming weaker and more unhappy, but was still not willing to leave her home.

I was sure she would not live to see her ninetieth birthday. Mother always treasured her home and her lovely things. She was a gracious lady who loved to entertain. Her home held wonderful memories for her. She has a very clear mind, but her body has given out. In the last month before her move, she fell three times, requiring the paramedics to come. The last time, she lay for an hour and a half before the nurse came and found her. Luckily, nothing was broken, but she was badly bruised and shaken.

The family, some of her neighbors, and her doctor had all been encouraging her to move into a safer environment. Now was the time. While the paramedics were there, I said, "Mother, do you realize now that you can not be home alone?" Her answer was, "Yes." I felt like the weight of the world had been lifted from my shoulders. My sisters felt the same way. I thought everyone

felt like I did. I was wrong.

One of my sons was angry with me. He felt we were forcing her into something she didn't want. Her neighbor across the street called crying. She said, "I didn't think your girls would do this to you." I knew we were doing the right thing, but my nerves were raw.

Moving day came and I tried to think of every angle so that it would go smoothly. My youngest sister offered to take mother for lunch and a ride, but she wanted to be home so my sister agreed to sit with her while my other sister and I got the apartment ready. My sister brought a nice lunch and then went home to sit with her son who had become ill. My aunt came in her place.

I hired a moving company that was very reputable. They did moving for the Chateau Brickyard and knew what to do. The movers were very careful with her things and knew how to reassure her, I could tell that she was extremely nervous and trying very hard to make the best of it.

We followed the movers to the new apartment. It had been newly painted, wallpapered, and carpeted. We were allowed to choose

the carpet and paper we wanted. When we got everything in place, it looked adorable. I knew she would like it.

It was time to go get Mother. My sister informed me that her family was coming for her birthday and she needed to go home. I felt resentful, at the time, that I had to go get mother alone. I had not counted on being as emotional about it as I was. I went back to the house. It seemed empty, and my mother looked very little sitting in her wheelchair. My aunt helped me get her into the car. As we drove out of the driveway, she turned and said, "Goodbye house."

I fought off tears, but as soon as we arrived at the Chateau Brickyard, the mood changed. The administrator greeted us, as did each member of the staff who was there. Mother was delighted with her apartment. She couldn't get over how much of her furniture we were able to use. We also took her lovely accessories and pictures, etc. It felt like home.

Staff members from Chateau Brickyard came up to the room with a lovely bouquet of flowers and move-in instructions contained in a booklet.

I spent the rest of the day with Mother. When we went to the dining room to eat, a special place was selected for her and she was introduced to

the ladies at her table. They have since become good friends. The kitchen staff welcomed her and she seemed relaxed. She especially enjoyed the piano music and the other residents who came over to speak to her.

Rosa, one of the workers at the Chateau Brickyard, had stayed with mother at night about a month before her move in. When mother came to the Chateau Brickyard. Rosa continued to check on her, introduced her to the hairdresser, and set her up a standing appointment.

In the following days of her first week there, the owners, Gary and Dixie Taylor, Kyle Taylor, the business manager; and Harriet, the laundry lady, all stopped by to visit her. This pleased her. She really likes all of them and now keeps a candy dish full for visitors.

I have done marketing for the Chateau Brickyard and the Retirement Living Group. I have worked with many families and I thought I knew exactly what to expect. I was wrong. I found that when it was my own parent, I was much more sensitive that everything be perfect. We had waited so long to get mother to make this decision, I didn't want anything to go wrong.

I realize now that even though I thought I was putting myself in the other people's shoes, I really didn't know how they felt or what

they were really going through. The people I assist now have my absolute understanding and help. I know that their loved one is as important to them as mine is to me.

My mother's birthday open house was wonderful. With the help of the Chateau Brickyard staff, we made it a night to remember. Eighty people signed the guest book. My mother radiated. People said she looked and acted years younger than she had just months before. When people would ask her if she was happy at Chateau Brickyard, she would say, "I loved my home and would like to be there, but I know I can't. I couldn't be in a nicer place, with nicer people than there are here."

Now the marketing people bring inquiries to her apartment. She loves to show it and tells them how nice it is there.