

SAFE ANCHORS

Stewart Hendrickson

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After sailing from San Pedro to Catalina Island in Southern California in the mid-1950s, we were in Avalon harbor with a big storm approaching from the East. To avoid the worst weather we decided to move to the lee side of the island. In the process of motoring out of the harbor, the painter pulling our dinghy became snared in the propeller. After untangling that, there was little time to sail around the island. We motored back into the harbor, secured our boat with two mooring lines, and, for extra security, dropped our anchor. That night 15-20 foot waves crashed into the harbor. After an exciting night onboard, we awoke to see many boats crashed into the sea wall. We were safe, our anchor holding fast in addition to the two mooring lines.

We all need at least one safe anchor to keep grounded when our lives seem stormy and out of control. I have experienced much stress this past year: moving my wife into memory care at Aegis Living last November, her dementia slowly increasing; moving her into an adult family home (AFH) in September only to find it was not a good place for her; and finally, after a week in the hospital, moving her into a safe place in a new AFH. This was in addition to selling our big house and moving into a condo in Ballard. All in this crazy time of COVID and the worst political season we have ever seen.

In the past, my wife was my safe anchor – her sound judgment and advice kept me on an even keel. Now it's my turn to be an anchor for her. But this last transition from her first AFH, through her hospital stay, into her new AFH, was too much for me. My daughter, who lives in California, is my safe anchor. We talk on the phone a lot. Now she is here after driving up from the Bay Area. But this time we needed more expert help and advice.

I received some sound and comforting advice from the social worker at the Greenwood Senior Center. She advised me to contact the director of a service that arranges family home placements and transitions for the elderly. That person became our case manager. She recommended a new AFH in Shoreline. After moving into her new home, my wife, who was over-drugged at the previous home, needed hospitalization to recover. We were fortunate to have two great hospital doctors, an internist, and a neurologist, to treat her and consult with us. They recommended a gerontology and palliative-care doctor, along with his nurse assistant, who took my wife on as their patient. The doctor advised us to consider hospice care. With these and others, we had a team of experts all working together for the care of my wife – it does take a community.

Hospice is focused on quality and comforting care rather than a cure for those with life-threatening diseases. Patients have to meet certain requirements to be admitted to hospice – this does not necessarily include imminent death. If conditions improve, they may leave hospice care, and return if the disease

worsens. This involves weekly visits by a nurse, social worker, and others, in consultation with family members, medical equipment such as wheelchairs, etc., and other services, all paid for by Medicare.

My wife was admitted to hospice care from Evergreen Hospital. Along with our “team,” and loving care by the owner of the AFH and her caretaker, we found a safe anchor in a good harbor for my wife. After several days she is doing much better, more relaxed, comfortable, and at peace in her new home – a positive improvement.

The future is uncertain but I am hopeful that things have taken a turn for the better.

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