

DIVORCE



dementia

A Spouse's Journal

Diane E. Peeling

Divorce Bye Dementia

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Dedication

For David R. Beveridge ☒ wherever you went!

For every caregiver! Every spouse and family member! For every friend!

This terminal illness in particular is about Vascular Dementia, and all types of Dementia including Alzheimer☒.

Any illness however it manifests itself is painful, emotion laden and a startling contrast to how we imagined our lives to be.

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to David my older brother Bob for his support when I was trying desperately to find out what was wrong before his diagnosis.

Thank you to David's oldest daughter Melanie as well when I gave her no choice. Until his short stay with her, she busily poo-pooed me when I talked to her on the phone when I was deep in my frustration. I wasn't just being the step mother from hell. It couldn't have been just me in what I was living, watching and being starved out of a solid marriage that we had until the disease began taking its toll.

My son and his girlfriend. Untold tears and I am sure some eye rolling. Love you Turkey!

My family, long-time and unexpected friends. The list of other persons is many.

Michael Simpson for editing.

Thank you

Chapter 1

The Subtle Life Changes

I met David R. Beveridge when he was 33. He was going through his second divorce and I was already through mine.

He smoked pot previously to us being introduced as I let it be known that there would be no drug use around me. I don't see the point and I had already been down that road with a spouse who chose drugs over me. I didn't need another one. I wholly believed that he was pot and alcohol free when I met him.

What were the signs?

Was I paying attention?

How many little things did I ignore?

When did he stop trusting me to listen?

Did he even know what was happening?

Did he know but ignore what he was feeling?

Did he wonder why he couldn't remember?

Was the excessive sleeping when he was about 33 the clue I missed?

I remember thinking that it was not normal for him to sleep that much. It was only a thought.

Was the consistency of his sperm at around the same age a clue that there were drastic changes happening in his body

that maybe weren't normal and were never asked about at the doctor's office?

As husband and wife we talked about why it was like that, but we didn't ask the doctor. Was this an important clue?

When did he really stop caring about how he dressed, bathed or the personal grooming? Did I miss how often he showered and when the habit changed drastically?

His obsession with cutting his nails never really changed until he was about █. It had to be Friday when he manicured his nails.

The social circle got smaller once we moved and I put it down to a strange place. If the person is reserved and somewhat shy to start with it is difficult to notice them backing away from social engagements, and I didn't question it as we all change.

Did I play into this unwittingly when I thought it was a good idea for him to go and work for his brother-in-law Peter?

In doing this was I unconsciously removing him from my line of sight, so to speak, as he was already deteriorating, and my instinctual fear chose the easiest path: to ignore what I was feeling. Consequently, I had no clue as to what *it* was?

When you find yourself faced with this disease the first question becomes, how did he get it? That is a question I don't know if research will ever be able to answer.

When he turned █ █ and it feels as strong today as it was then █ Melanie and I planned his █th birthday party after we moved. Peter took David to an auction sale or touring or whatever they were doing and then returned him at the prearranged time. When he got to the top of the stairs on the deck, I wished him a happy birthday and I got this overwhelming feeling from him that on an intellectual brain wave he said, "**MY LIFE IS OVER!**"

I kind of looked at him and he had not said anything out loud because Melanie and Alicia were standing beside me. This wasn't the first time I felt (heard) this from him. The exact same feeling, whatever you want to call it, happened the day we got married. As soon as he said, "I DO" I got the most bizarre energy from him and the only way to describe it is he puffed up his chest and said, "NOW I AM THE BOSS!"

My immediate response to that was, "WE'LL SEE!" on the same wavelength of energy. No, he did not physically puff out his chest or say that, but that was the message I got loud and clear.

I don't know if he got my message back but he did later that day when I was more than prickly about everything. The prevailing aura was the same pretty much for the next 7 days of our honeymoon. We always seemed to be in tune on some level until he was 77.

After his birthday and I returned from a month in Ontario, life seemed somewhat normal. We had purchased shares in some cows with my brother, Peter. David had started working for WK Trucking in Mundare and I was lost in some ways. I thought I could take a year off work and be fine about it but I slipped steadily into gambling more than I should have, and I justified it one way or another.

I have veered off the topic of this book here but it has become a part of it and has been for a while now.

I still don't know what happened to David but I certainly have first-hand knowledge of the devastation it has left in its wake.

Chapter 2

In 1988 the Grand Am broke down in Vegreville and we towed it home. David set about repairing it and it went to hell from there. Before long it was totally pulled apart and no chance of it running. The front wheel was off. The glove compartment was pulled out and the wires were all there and tools were everywhere except put away. This was an oddity for David as he had always been obsessive about his tools. The car sat in the shop until 1990 when it was taken to another mechanic that put it back together. The problem was an electrical. This was what David was good at and it really didn't make sense that he couldn't repair the car.

It has been things like that, that have happened and he had no desire to fix them and he was a heavy duty mechanic and has taught enough people over the years how to repair equipment and vehicles. Repairing most things was a breeze for him before 1988. The lawn mower when we moved to the acreage was a minor mechanical issue. All of a sudden the mower required a screwdriver stuck in it to keep it running. All that was actually wrong was the throttle cable had stretched and needed to be replaced. There was some mechanical stuff he didn't like to work on and mostly he did semi-trucks and trailers. He was really good with electrical also but even that went in the toilet.

Our Miata fell into the mechanical abyss. (This was our Buzzardmobile as I lovingly called it. Both of us gray when we bought it and I was only 38). He locked out the radio in it when

he tried to start it after sitting for a couple of years. He pulled out the radio and put another one in it and broke a piece of the plastic covering at the top. That annoyed me to no end but it showed he didn't care. I think there must have been a short of some sort in it as the battery goes dead after about one week of sitting without moving. I need to get this fixed properly as the whole piece is loose.

In January XXXX my mother passed away and at the time I never put his behaviour down to anything more than the distance that was growing between us. We spent X weeks while mom was in palliative care before she passed away. The only response I got from David was, X am sorry,X and a hug that would have been warmer had it been given by an iceberg. That is how I felt and David and his brother-in-law just continued to smoke pot as that is what they had been doing since we arrived in Ontario.

It was truly then that I noticed the emotional distance that had become part of our lives! Hope was alive and kicking in me, we could get through this. It just had to be a rough patch in our marriage. David's response when my father passed away was totally different. He was warm, kind and loving towards me.

At Easter, (March XX, XXXX) David was moving a trailer with a tractor and tipped the tractor over and broke a couple of ribs. Had he just done as the doctor told him and stayed immobile till the ribs healed the next few weeks of insanity would not have happened. On April X, XXXX, I took him to the Two Hills Hospital as he couldn't breathe properly and that is when we found out one of his lungs had filled with blood as he had punctured it when he was driving the same tractor around a few days later. The bouncing on the tractor and his inability to sit still contributed to the lung being punctured. While he was in hospital my experience with doctors and our medical system deteriorated quickly. I followed the ambulance into Edmonton and

after a few hours of sitting around the doctor finally saw him and needed to insert a tube into his lung to drain the blood. I am not a nurse nor do I have a desire to be one. In the emergency ward in the Royal Alexandria hospital I had the honour of acting as one when I assisted the doctors during the tube insertion in his lung. To this day I still have not figured out why they would not have put it in the bottom of his lung instead of between the █rd and █th rib at the top. As I helped keep him still while the doctor was doing the tube insertion, I was appalled at the amount of blood that came out before they got the container attached to measure the amount of fluid. It was a litre and half within a █-minute period. That did not include the amount that was on the bed under him. I helped clean up the bed and the mess and it bordered on scary. As I sit here and type this I can still picture clearly what I saw, helped clean up, the monitors and the cubicle. This was supposed to be a temporary tube and was supposed to have the drainage tube put in the later the same morning. This became a two-week hospital stay and more medical insanity.

Chapter 3

David was ☒ when his left leg began to twitch, about August ☒, ☒☒☒. I noticed it when we sat down to play our normal game of crib. It was how we started our day for many years, a coffee, a cigarette and crib. The twitch didn't really change how he walked so he didn't go to the doctor.

Would they have been able to do anything at the time? I don't know and my faith in doctors bites except for one. My experience is they really don't listen to what you tell them anyhow.

In October ☒☒☒ he went to his doctor and all he was interested in was giving him medication for his "*diabetes*." No matter how many times I reiterated to the doctor that the only time his blood sugar was out of whack was when he drank even a mouthful of alcohol and he got into pop. David was a die-hard Pepsi fan. We tested that theory out a few times with a blood glucose monitor, normal exercises, normal food including deserts and his blood sugar levels were between ☒ and ☒.

January ☒, ☒☒☒, David was laid off from work. The twitching in his leg did not change or stop. We both just ignored that it was twitching.

In October ☒☒☒ I did not go with him to his doctor's appointment as I assumed he was going to mention the twitching at that time. When I asked that night, "did you mention the twitching?"

He said, "No," as it didn't hurt so it didn't bother him.

Ok, so I left it alone as he is an adult.

To this day I question, "Was it a mistake to leave it alone?"

We both smoked at the time and in the winter the deal was, there is a room in the basement we could smoke in, door closed, window open in the winter only all other times of the year, outside. There was only once that rule got broken and that was my sister-in-law was here for visit and as she could not walk easily we smoked in the house upstairs while she was here.

During ██████ the biggest changes were that the days increased between personal grooming and doing anything. The emotional distance about personal grooming became obvious. He wouldn't wear underwear, and there would be incontinence stains on his pants. It embarrassed everyone but him. He just ignored me if I said anything to him. He smoked outside and sat on the couch. He drove to town every morning for coffee and his █ pack of beer that I really wasn't aware of until I looked at the bank statements a couple of times. The grocery and liquor store and the gas station were the regular stops. He wasn't working, and he didn't do anything around the house including cooking any meals. To this day it was a good thing even if at the time I didn't think so.

It never registered how much he was drinking and smoking pot. I went to work every day and he slowed down on the weekends and he didn't drive to town. The changes were drastic but at the same time they were subtle. While I was processing and working, he was collecting employment insurance and he had worked hard all his life, so he should enjoy some of his life as he saw fit. Shocking how a simple thought can change into life-altering circumstances.

Throughout the year of ██████ when David went anywhere with Peter in his truck the twitching of his leg would drive Peter crazy as there was empty pop and water bottles on the floor of

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the truck, empty wrappers of different sorts, and the twitching would cause noises. Peter came to call it, "The Garbage Shuffle," when out of earshot of David. In some ways it was Peter's way of coping with the changes in David as Peter has known him since XXXXX and worked with him on and off over the years.

Chapter 4

Two things happened in January 1988. One incident was on January 15, 1988. It was Friday and colder than a witch's tit out. I remember thinking how ironic as it was the anniversary of mom passing away. The cows were out on Range Road 100 as I was coming home from work. I thought it odd and wondered why. I came to the house and David was sitting in his usual spot on the sofa. I asked, "How the cows got out?"

He said, "I don't know."

I was pissed off and frustrated because he did not move off the sofa to help chase them back in. I got them back in through the corner of the fence that was down. I fixed it as best as I could. I came back to the house and again asked David, "What happened?"

The same response again! The phone rang and it was my niece telling me the cows were out again. David never made one move to get off his ass and help. We put them back in again and fixed it better to hold them in. Peter was coming out the next day so I knew he would help fix the fence. It was the next when what had happened came to light. He had parked behind the haystack in the field just inside the driveway. At some point after consuming his beer he drove through the barbed wire fence. How he didn't break the fence is beyond me. He did break off three fence posts though. The tracks showed that he drove through the fence and turned in the field and back out the fence. At that

point he broke the corner post and must have gunned the engine and ended up across the road in the ditch. He then proceeded to try and dig himself out with the car. He had small trees coming out the front bumper and the snow was packed where he drove forward and backward. The car was still in the ditch that night when I got home but I didn't notice it. The car was scratched, the mirror hanging by a wire and the vinyl part of the roof was torn apart from the barbed wire. The car was destroyed and it didn't have a scratch on it previously. The next day when I took him to task about it, he kept saying that he didn't remember. I couldn't fathom anyone not remembering that amount of damage being done.

David was walking down the stairs and I was headed up and I noticed his right leg looked smaller than the left one. We made an appointment with the Dr. and the visit resulted with the Dr. wanting to change his medications. He wanted the pharmacy to bubble pack his medications as I had complained that he would not take them unless I handed them to him. I found that bizarre and irritating as hell when they were right in front of him. I had to prompt the Dr. to watch him walk and I questioned the twitch.

I had to ask the Dr., "Is it my imagination or is his left leg smaller than the right?" He asked David to hop up on the examination table. When he measured his leg it was 2 cm smaller than the other.

He immediately recommended seeing a neurologist and that is what the next step was. The first part of April we got in to see Dr. Beste Edguer and that is the first time, in I don't know how long, that I actually felt some respect from the medical profession. During the initial visit we were filling out the standard forms and I checked what David put down and the only thing he put down was the back surgery that he had in XXXXX. I asked him

how come he didn't put down the broken ribs and the two week stay in the hospital while they were getting the blood out of his lungs, which was a year and a half ago. He didn't put anything down for his father's cancer, or his sister, Sheila's diabetes.

The doctor asked me numerous questions, as she is of the ilk that when dealing with a couple to ask the spouse the questions. They will give a better idea of what has been going on. I gave her details of what I had noticed and she used it accordingly. She had a perplexed look on her face. David had lost enough muscle that he looked skinny when she was checking him. I really hadn't noticed how much until then. We had already stopped sleeping in the same bed so I had not really seen him naked in █ months at that point.

She checked his throat, reflexes and such and questioned him. His answers were vague at best and simple with no explanation of any sort. She asked me the same questions and I answered as knowledgeable as I was on them. She forwarded a request to another neurologist to do some muscle testing to try and figure out what was causing the muscle loss as this wasn't necessarily weight.

The muscle testing was in late April and the results were inconclusive as she did deep tissue testing and responses showed within normal ranges. I sat watching them doing the insertion of the needles and he didn't react that much to the poking. Every needle she put in him, I cringed.

We went back to Dr. Edguer and she requested an MRI to get a better idea of what was going on. The scan came back and it showed there had been numerous (systemic) mini strokes but it also showed abnormal brain shrinkage and she said, "She usually only see that in severe alcoholics."

I never put his amount of drinking down to alcoholism, but, I should have as I had seen it in my own father growing up and

he never had dementia. Over the years I had my concerns and pointed them out to him every time he only had a couple of drinks, yet half a twenty-six was gone. It did not matter how many times I was bitter about the drinking and the effects on his blood sugar, he would sneak it and think he was pulling a fast one (a part of his personality).

I watched the consumption of alcohol but I chose to ignore how I felt about it. I did nothing but bitch over the years as he, wasn't a violent drunk, he wasn't falling down, he really didn't do any of the obnoxious behaviour other than, he could talk your ear off. That got to be irritating because inevitably the maudlin mood would come out. This was one of his many ways of getting his emotions out.

My intolerance for drunkenness has not gotten any better and I am a lot less tolerant than I ever was. This goes right along with the pot smoking. Drunk or drug intoxicated never made me feel any more loved and wanted as a wife because the high wasn't our life together, it was the synthetic good feeling. I still feel emotionally scarred from the ongoing emotional neglect from drugs and alcohol consumed by my spouses during the relationship. This has triggered the worst reaction in me.

The emotional, healing/hiding was gambling. It was only XXXXX. That was my healing while the disease within David was just beginning. As it progressed so did my gambling and my justification for throwing away my control to a habit no less insidious than drugs and alcohol.

Had David left well enough alone when we were in Atlantic City, I don't know if my gambling would have gotten as out of control as it has in the last X years. In front of my brother and sister-in-law and other strangers in one of Trump's casinos he was mean and suggested loudly that maybe I should call X XXXX gamblers anonymous as he thought I was spending too much

money on our holiday. Keep in mind that he gambled the day away as well. My reaction then and still to this day is, █Watch me!█My reaction to anyone telling me or implying that I cannot do what I want or need to do is, █I am an adult and can make decisions for myself on how I behave,█a nasty habit that takes a great deal of will power to control and I don't always win the battle. Some part of me is still doing the █watch me█reaction when I have to deal with David and the illness. This illness by definition is passive-aggressive behaviour on a level of unconsciousness that maybe we can't even begin to understand. Is this disease the reaction for the actionable behaviour over the years for us?