

## My Maggie

By Mary Jane McCormick

The poet, Mary Oliver, asks a most profound question at the end of her poem, *The Summer Day* ... "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

This question nudges me to share my experience of Maggie Beyer. I met her four years ago through the Windsor Gardens Writers Group. Maggie's severe limitation of sight did not keep her away. Maggie touched me with her style and grace, as she shared from her years of writing poetry and travel logs for a weekly magazine. When asked to be one of her caregivers, I knew that knowing her more deeply would be a gift.

Maggie's family made the agonizing decision to place her in a care facility as she neared the end of her life. My sadness is overshadowed by a deep gratitude for knowing her.

Our time together was priceless. We read poetry, we sang, we danced, we cried, and we prayed together. Even as the dementia took up more space in her mind, Maggie's soul peeked through and said, "I am here!"

A friend asked me once, "Why do you refer to her as 'My Maggie'?" I have cared for thousands of people over my 50-plus years as a nurse. At some point, Maggie's preciousness of spirit took hold of me. Our relationship was not only one of heart but it also filled my soul.

Quoting another poet seems fitting for this woman who used words so elegantly throughout her life:

*What lies behind us/and what lies before us/are tiny matters/compared to/what lies within us.*  
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Thank you, Maggie for sharing the depth of what lies within you. Thank you for allowing me to be part of what you did with your one wild and precious life.