

Memory of a Summer Holiday

By Sophy Churches

I used to work as a secretary for many years. Then we moved to Herefordshire in England and purchased a house in a faraway place on a mountain where you could see down to the winding River Wye and numerous forests and the Goodrich Castle which was built in the 15th century. In fact our house was at the edge of a forest. I couldn't find a secretarial job nearby, our nearest town was 11 miles away, where I found a job in a home for the mentally and physically handicapped people.

They planned a holiday each year in the summer to take the most capable residents. This year they planned the holiday to Weymouth, which was a seaside resort down south of England in Devonshire. Of course they needed a good amount of staff to take along even with the chosen 15 residents. I was chosen as one of the staff and admittedly I was very happy about it. They took us there by bus and we were put up in a Bed & Breakfast, which are famous in England for their nice landladies and landlords. They knew of course our situation that we would arrive with 15 mentally and physically disabled women.

They put us up in rooms where 4 or 5 people could sleep. Our luggage was a big part of the deal because each woman had to have clean clothes and underwear for every day plus a set of seven incontinence pads and incontinence pants and wipes and washcloth, towels etc. The necessity of sleeping with these women in the same room was obvious after we arrived, so there would be supervision even at night for these women. It was, obvious that it wasn't going to be an ordinary holiday. I had just about gotten used to the 8 hours of work with them and all their incontinence habits, but here I had to deal with it 24 hours a day, for 7 days. As it turned out, it wasn't as bad as I thought before and we always managed to be ready and dressed for the sumptuous breakfast that these holiday places are famous for. It was cooked and served by the landlady. Then, after the breakfast, our day began and we lined up the ladies in small groups so each one of the nurses had 5 residents to take care of. We walked down by the seaside where there was a wonderful promenade and walked miles and miles of these promenades - there and back. Then we turned into some fish and chip shop for lunch, fed the ladies – although most of them could eat by themselves.

The toileting was a little harsh in the Fish and Chip shops, as the English holiday places are not built for these conveniences.

After lunch we walked some more, this time in town, looking at shop windows, where the girls could buy some horrific knickknacks from their small amount of pocket monies. The weather was mostly nice and sunny which was a nice surprise for England.

One day a few helicopters were flying above us in a fleet. One of the girls looked up and shouted, "Look - bilicopters!"

From that day, I do not know what helicopter is but I call those wingful things bilicopters.