

I Love My Life continued 8/2019
By Tim Conroy.

I cannot contain myself therefore, I was inspired to create and submit this manuscript. No one is paying me for this submission – damn it. No prize is being offered, even from the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care; “Rights Products for October”. I just can’t contain myself. My reward is having a forum to express myself, but if someone wants to pay me it’s OK I won’t tell.

I know this manuscript is to be about how we get our resident rights met; for me that's a very easy topic. I live at Dobie Road nursing home (formally known as Ingham County Medical Care Facility (ICMCF)) in mid-Michigan. I never have to give a thought in regard to my rights. All staff; from clerical, medical, nursing, and maintenance are very aware of my rights. More than my rights, the staff are very dedicated to making sure my rights and needs are met. Once a year all nursing homes in Michigan are evaluated to make sure licensing regulations are in compliance. For ICMCF, the regulations just make sense. I suspect that all employees of ICMCF know the regulations because they ALWAYS make sure that they follow them.

For example; my getting dressed and ready for the day is provided by a Certified Nurses Aid (CNA) with their usual routine or my usual routine, either doesn't matter to me. Whatever is easiest for the CNA is fine with me. All the staff, from every department, always make sure my rights are never violated. I think it is just second nature to them because they are dedicated, trained, and have common sense.

If any resident ever expresses a concern about their care or rights to any employee (usually it is a CNA) and it is immediately addressed. There is a whole list of concern or complaint takers/processors who can be contacted if the CNA is unable to adequately or satisfactorily address any concern. These individuals are identified to all residents and families in our resident’s handbook or at our resident council meeting. The floor nurse is usually contacted first and talks with the resident. If the nurse is unable to satisfactorily address the concern, she/he may contact one of our social workers and/or her supervisor. Our supervisors and social workers are well versed on our resident rights. We have a special social worker who is specially trained to file grievances on our behalf. If the grievance does not

resolve the situation, one of our head administrators is contacted. I don't know if a concern ever has ever made it that far because I think the concern is always resolved before that.

All residents and family are encouraged to make contact with anyone of the complaint or concern processors. If a resident or family member feels their concern has not been adequately addressed in the state of Michigan, we have an ombudsman's office whose contact information is prominently displayed in our entrance lobby.

The important thing for residents to know is to not stop talking to people until your right is met. I have personally observed that all ICMCF employees go the extra mile to make sure all residences rights, needs, and desires are met if possible. The employees seem to be fanatical in their desire to help. I will cite several examples of how I have personally been treated by all the staff at Dobie Road.

Our business office maintains an account for any resident, so they don't have to keep money in the room. They always respond immediately to inquiries about our balances. They probably do a bunch of other things I am unaware of.

Our director of nursing constantly make sure that everything runs smoothly. She must do a million things I am unaware of because things just run smoothly. She makes sure all shifts are covered by both nurses and Certified Nurses Aids (CNA's); I think she arranges or provides constant training and seminars. We have a special infection control nurse that make sure any and all vaccinations are up to date, including flu shots. He also administers new vaccines as they develop and become available. I'm sure nursing staff provides a lot of care and services that I am unaware of.

Our dietary staff really goes the extra mile. When I enter the dining room it's like entering a family-style restaurant with many home-cooked menu items. Usually when having a meal in our dining room it is like attending a party because there's much kidding around and laughter. I enjoy the food here very much. We have monthly meetings where residents have major input on menu offerings. Often at these meetings we talk about what we would prefer, and the majority opinion prevails. Every so often they come up with an updated menu because there are some

things that are not being ordered very much. For every meal we have 2 main entrées as well as other things that are always available. With the quality of food presented you would think that the dietary staff is competing with other restaurants to get our business. I have heard in our new addition they will have a restaurant. I'm sure glad I don't own a restaurant in the area and must compete with ICMCF's new restaurant. Our dining rooms are not only like a family restaurant, but our wait staff is specially trained to help us eat our food. In my dining room the wait staff are all CNA's and work together to make sure everyone is taking care of especially with eating meals.

If anyone in our activities department discovers a resident who needs assistance with activities, they will move mountains to make sure that resident is guided to the appropriate activity. I had a roommate who was terminal. His condition involved reduced brain function and he frequently hollered and yelled at all CNA's and nurses. They put him in my room because he frequently yelled at his hallucinations all night which didn't bother me a bit since I don't hear well, and in fact I was glad they put him with me because I am very tolerant.

One of the recreational therapist from the activity department came to see him every day and brought one of the therapy cats to visit him. He enjoyed the cat very much. In the grand scheme of things, it doesn't really matter if one old dying man is comforted while he is dying but the dedicated recreational therapy department didn't see it that way. When he was hostile and difficult to handle his visits from the recreational therapist with the cat were never threatened to be withheld. He has since passed away but the end of his life was a lot more tolerable because of the dedicated staff of our therapeutic activity department.

I'm sure there are other departments like laundry, that I'm not very familiar with, who make certain all of our clothing and linens are perfectly clean and properly placed and labeled. The housekeeping department has a bunch of clean freaks working here. You could literally safely eat off any of the floors, although our nursing staff would be very upset if you tried. All the bathrooms and showers are immaculate.

I need to mention the administrative assistants (secretaries and/or unit ward clerks). They schedule transportation to medical appointment that ICMCF cannot provide. If you have cataracts, etc. ICMCF will discover them and have them fixed. They do a million other things. Very important

to me is that they package, ship, and return mail order purchases as necessary.

One of my favorite departments is our maintenance department. They keep track of everything and check the whole building daily looking for anything broken, burned out bulbs, etc. Every nurses station has a "maintenance clipboard" that the nurses and CNA's list anything they would like maintenance to check or repair. I have challenged my friends here who are very handyman oriented and can repair anything to find anything that needs attention. They never have.

For me, the most important thing that our maintenance department does is help me with my ham radio station. I have been a ham radio operator Amateur Radio Operator (NOT CB OPERATOR) for over 50 years. Amateur Radio was a very important part of my life and still is thanks to our maintenance department. They have installed 3 antennas for different bands. One of them is a 130-foot-long wire antenna. They have installed my radios, an audio mixer, and filters. I don't think I have the right to have an Amateur Radio Station, but ICMCF apparently believes that I do. I communicate all over the world and I am an active member in our local ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Service) group in our city. Amateur Radio operators both locally and all over the world are amazed at all that the ICMCF Nursing Home has done for me.

Assuming a person or resident does not have cognitive dysfunction, I think we residents have the responsibility to respond to staff politely and courteously. Many staff members become like family to us. It seems to me that if residents follow the "Golden rule" when it comes to responding to staff and employees, there would be a no need to make sure our rights are followed. I realize that some of our residents due to aging have limited brain function and can't help being disrespectful and hostile, but the staff are always tolerant and understanding. I have never seen a staff member or employee be angry with a resident or speak disrespectfully.

When residents are able to respond, they would be well served to respond to employees and staff with the same respect that they respond to us. All residents have bad days and so do staff and employees. Since we expect employees and staff to be tolerant of our but bad days it is extremely beneficial to us to return this respect to employees and staff on their off days.

I do however understand as resident's age they lose function and/or must endure some pain and discomfort; this is just part of life, but this is no excuse for narcissism or being overly concerned about one's self with little or no concern for others around them. Maybe a resident is low on funds, or perhaps must use all savings to live in a nursing home and have no funds to leave to children. That's why we have savings so we can be financially independent and not burden our children economically.

If you're fortunate to survive into the later years in life, challenges are just a part of it. It does not serve us to be angry and demanding because of the cost of our care. Many people die from old age every day. Death is just a normal part of living. Maybe we would be better served to be grateful for life and the care we receive. If we are grateful for life and whatever care we receive, this would improve the quality of our care and make life a lot better for everyone.

I am very grateful to the National Consumers Voice for Quality Long-Term Care for striving to ensure that everyone receives the highest quality of care that I receive many times over in a day. Without the Consumer Voice; a strong advocate for nursing home to provide complete and proper care, would be silent. I am certain without the Consumer Voice possibly even my nursing home (ICMCF) would not have evolved to provide the competent care I receive – THANK YOU CONSUMERS VOICE.

Many residents and older people are just marking time until they can leave this planet. They're not suicidal they're just ready to leave. It's OK for me to leave also, but I don't have to wait to pass to go to Glory because I'm already here. I call it (ICMCF) Dobie Road Nursing Home and Ham (Amateur) Radio.