

After residing in the San Francisco Bay Area for 86 years, I finally convinced my mom, Gladys Pash, that it was time to move to Reno to live closer to me. In July of 2009 she did just that. After thorough searching and talking to several friends and acquaintances I made the decision that *Cascades of the Sierra* was to be mom's new home. And am I glad I did.

My mother had finally settled in to her new assisted- living arrangement and was beginning to enjoy her new surroundings. Needless to say, moving from the only area she had ever known for 86 years to the much smaller, desert city of Reno was quite traumatic, but as she did with everything else she adjusted. My mom had outlived two husbands and suffered with breast cancer twice, but it was always her positive outlook that carried her through each new chapter of her life. Mom thoroughly enjoyed all of the staff at the *Cascades*, but one member, Carolina Urizar, quickly became her favorite.

Mom had always been extremely independent and wasn't accustomed to others waiting on her and assisting her with her day- to- day household tasks. Carolina knew that my mom was experiencing a bit of anxiety in her new home, so she made an extra effort to knock on her door and visit with her each day. This daily visit and Carolina's willingness to go the extra mile made the transition to her new home much easier. It was as if Carolina knew that a kind word and a gentle spirit would assuage my mom's fears. She took the extra time to get to know Gladys and to learn about her life and all that was important to her. She would sit with her in her apartment and visit with her, always making sure to be polite and courteous and never over-step her bounds. A knock at the door would signify that Carolina was there and did my mom need any assistance with anything. Whether it was a tender caring hand to assist her with her toiletry needs or an arm to lend as she helped my mom get to the restaurant for her meals, Carolina was always there at just the right time. And there wasn't a night that went by that Carolina didn't bring my mom a Dove dark chocolate candy (her favorite) before she left for the night. Oh how Gladys appreciated the care and attention and always made sure to tell me how incredible Carolina was.

Then came the fateful day – Sunday, November 8<sup>th</sup>. I received a 7:30 AM call from the *Cascades*. She was rushed to the hospital where she stayed for four long, agonizing days. The diagnosis was that she had suffered a series of strokes. After much deliberation and soul-searching it was decided that mom would be allowed to

return to her apartment and with the help of St. Mary's Hospice and the wonderful, caring staff at the *Cascades* she would be allowed to transition to death in her new home, surrounded by those who loved and cared for her.

Nothing could have prepared me for what was to come. For 16 days, Gladys Pash, clung to life, imparting her love and wisdom to all who came in contact with her. Never did I realize what a loving, gentle process this was going to be. My mom lay in her bed and transitioned from this life to the next with all of the emotional and spiritual stamina that I had come to expect from her. And by her side for 16 days was Carolina. She was there with a cool cloth for her forehead, a sip of water for a dry mouth, a change of pajamas every morning and oh so much more. As a daughter who loves her mother, I was going through the grieving process knowing that the woman who brought me into this world was about to be leaving me. I didn't want to leave my mom's side, but when I had to, I knew that she was in capable, caring, loving hands. Each time I would return to visit my mom Carolina was either sitting by her side or there was a soft knock at the door asking to come in and visit with Gladys. She would spend countless hours, often on her time off, sitting with my mom. She prayed with her, listened to her, put moisturizer on her face (something my mom did religiously twice a day for most of her adult life) or put lipstick on her, as she knew Gladys never went anywhere without her lips on. Carolina was amazing – I have no other words to describe her.

On November 28<sup>th</sup> 2009, Mom left this earth. I miss her everyday, but I can truly say that because of the loving care and compassion that Carolina and the whole team at the *Cascades* displayed to her in her final days, it has made it easier to let her go. To me Carolina Urizar will never be a caregiver; she will forever be my "care angel".