

A HOLLAND HOME TESTIMONIAL

Peace of Mind



A PERSONAL TESTIMONY BY MELANIE JONGSMA

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and granddaughter of Holland Home resident Henry Jongsma*



Peace

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fter my grandmother died in 1997, my family wondered how Gramp would manage on his own in the condo he and Gram had shared. My grandmother had always done all the cooking, all the cleaning, and most of the socializing, so it was hard to imagine how Gramp would get along without her.

But he surprised us all by setting up new routines for himself, and learning to buy his own groceries, and picking up the phone to call a friend for coffee. I know it was hard for him, and sometimes it broke my heart to watch him fumble with the vacuum cleaner, or to hear the frustration in his voice when he had to ask for help with the dishwasher, or the computer, or the TV remote. But I was proud of him for trying, and for being brave enough to ask for help.

For nearly 15 years, he carved out a new life as a widower. He kept busy, and learned to laugh at himself, and accepted invitations to supper. He got along fine, and my whole family was grateful for his good health and his good attitude.

“I’m not Ready”

Then, a couple years ago, Gramp started to need help now and then. He stopped driving at night. He missed a couple of appointments he had written on his calendar. He misplaced a credit card. He lost some weight. We were a little concerned.

We touched base with him more frequently (while trying not to seem over-protective). And every now and then, I would ask if he had given any thought to checking out Holland Home, the retirement community where several of his friends were living.

“I’m not ready for that,” he always said.

Now, I work for Providence Life Services, which is the parent company of Holland Home and seven other retirement and assisted living communities. I happen to know that people *never* think they are ready to move to a retirement community.

I also know that 9 times out of 10, once they move in, they are glad they did. In fact, they wonder why they didn’t do it sooner!

So I understood what Gramp meant when he said he wasn’t ready.

Still, I wanted him to *get* ready before something happened — like falling down the stairs, or driving through a red light, or leaving the gas on in his condo. I mean, I’ve heard plenty of stories about people who “weren’t ready” to move to a retirement

community, and then ended up in skilled nursing because “something happened.” I didn’t want Gramp to become one of those stories.

But I knew the decision had to be his.

“You Can’t Push”

In fact, that’s something I learned from Fred Bolhouse and his son Ray. Fred was living at Holland Home, and I interviewed him and his son for a blog I wrote for Providence. My grandfather was about the same age as Fred was when Fred moved in, so I specifically asked whether Fred had made the decision, or Ray, or the whole family. I also asked if they had any advice for me and my family.

Ray told me, “It was his [Fred’s] decision. You can’t push someone to make a decision like this.” But Ray also said that the family should definitely communicate how that decision affects *them*. For example, says Ray, “I let him know, ‘Dad, you can’t keep living on frozen dinners, and you can’t keep expecting the neighbors to look out for you, and I hate stopping at the Jewel. I’ll do it, but I don’t like it.’” In other words, Ray never told Fred he *had* to move to a retirement home, but he did let his dad know that his decision to stay at home was affecting other people. Fred took that into consideration when he finally decided to move.

That conversation was very helpful to me personally — and it made a very helpful blog, if I do say so myself!



You can read the blog about Fred and Ray if you scan the code at left with your smartphone. Or you can go to www.providenceliveservices.com and search for “Bolhouse.”

So I took their advice and didn't push Gramp, but I did make a point of asking the question now and then, and I did keep praying that he would arrive at the decision to move in before something happened.

And then he did.

Suddenly Ready

Suddenly, he was ready. He had a brief memory lapse (while he was driving) that frightened him. No one was hurt (thank God), and the only result was that Gramp suddenly knew it might not be safe for him to be on his own anymore.

Before he could change his mind, we set up an appointment at Holland Home. We met with Jonathan, who was very gentle and excellent. We toured a few different apartments, each of which had different benefits. We had lunch in the dining room, where the food was surprisingly delicious and all the staff were friendly.

All in the Family

We also learned that there are several staff at Holland Home whose own parents live there. Jill, one of the nursing staff, and Janet, one of the Life Enrichment staff, brought their mother there when she began needing help. Bev, the Director of Nursing, moved her mother in when it was no longer safe for her to live alone. (In fact, Bev's mother used to work at Holland Home too!) And Joan, one of my co-workers at the corporate office, is grateful that her mom can be at Holland Home.

There are others, too, and you can see them in the last couple pages of this booklet. I wanted to include them with my story because to me, that says a lot: When the staff, who know the behind-the-scenes details, are willing to trust Holland Home with their families, that's deep.

Peace of Mind

So there's a reason I'm sharing all this: I want to reassure you.

If you are in the same situation I was in — with a father or mother or grandparent that you're concerned about — I want to give you hope. Maybe in the back of your mind, you're wondering if there is something you should be doing, but you don't know where to start. Or maybe you've started — you've

brought up the subject, you've had the difficult conversation — but you don't know what to do to keep things moving.

Do what we did: Call Holland Home.

They will be just as sensitive with your family as they have been with mine. They've been through all the emotions that you are going through, so they can guide you through the next steps you need to take. This is not just a job to them; it's a ministry. They really want what's best for you and your family.

For us, Holland Home was the right answer. Gramp is doing very well there. He's found a few old friends, and made a few new ones. He loves the food. He's content. He's healthy. And he's safe. That gives us a peace of mind that we didn't have when he was still living in his condo.

And Holland Home makes it easy for us as a family to stay connected with Gramp! I have supper with him once a week in the dining room — the food is great, and the servers all greet us warmly. Sometimes I stop in after supper with my dogs — Gramp enjoys seeing them, and the other residents all smile when they see us coming! We've even had large family gatherings at Holland Home — there are plenty of common areas where we can all sit and visit for as long as we want.

Personal Endorsement

So take this as a personal endorsement from me.
And look at the other endorsements I've included
on the following pages, from other staff members
who have family members living at Holland Home.

Then pick up the phone and call Holland Home:

(708) 596-3050.

I think you'll be glad you did.

The Holland Home Family

Sharing the Caring

“I think about this almost every time I walk into the building when I come to work in the morning, that I know she is safe because of the systems we have in place here. For example, if she doesn’t come to the dining room for a meal, she will be checked on. And the nursing staff is here should she have a problem — that also gives me peace of mind. Mom even has such a good relationship with her housekeeper, so I know that housekeeper is keeping an eye on her when she sees her every week.



Beverly Hoitsma, *Director of Nursing*
and her mother,
Fran Jager, *Holland Home resident*

“We are also grateful for the Christian atmosphere at Holland Home and the great socialization network that is available as well.”

Better for Everyone



Joan Schutt, *Director of Corporate Events*
and her mother,
Evelyn Koldenhoven, *Holland Home resident*

“My mother, Evelyn Koldenhoven, has been at Holland Home since May of 2005. She has been very happy there and has made many friends. She enjoys the dining service and not having to cook meals herself. She often says that she wishes she had moved in sooner!

“Mom is now in Assisted Living, and the Holland Home staff are there for her with very thorough and tender care. The staff members are like extended family to her. It makes me and my sister feel confident because we know someone is there for her and looking in on her several times a day, giving her the assistance she needs that we can’t provide.

“Mom is truly cared for with the love of Christ, and I have witnessed this many times. It is a relief for the family. I have friends who are struggling with parents’ declining health, trying to keep them at home for as long as possible. I always suggest looking into Holland Home. Parents don’t want to become a burden to their children, and the Holland Home makes that possible. It makes life better for everyone in the family.”

Health, Help, and Happiness

“I feel confident about my mom living at Holland Home, because I know she is getting three good meals a day, and she is getting the medication she needs, when she needs it. She has residents all around to talk to and can engage in many activities that are offered. By the pull of a cord, she has help when she needs it.”

Janet Boer, *Life Enrichment*

and her sister,

Jill Van Kuiken, *Nursing Office Coordinator*

daughters of

Bonnie Venhuizen, *Holland Home resident*

A Community of Faith

“In my 23 years working at Holland Home, I have been blessed to have several family members be part of this community. My husband’s grandmother and my grandmother lived at Holland Home and Providence South Holland (then Rest Haven South) until they passed away. And now my mother-in-law and aunt live at Holland Home. My husband and I are so grateful to have them in a community of faith where they are supported and encouraged to be as active as they can be physically, mentally, and spiritually. Every day I am thankful to be able serve and love the wonderful residents and staff here. I know that God has chosen all of us to love, laugh, worship, and pray together in this special place.”

Barb Van Milligan, *Life Enrichment Director*

daughter of

Bertha Van Milligan, *Holland Home resident*

of Mind



HOLLAND HOME

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www.ProvidenceLifeServices.com