

18 JFor Driftwood
25 June 2014

A message left on my answering machine wondered why I would imply that Brinkworthy is a terrible place to live (“What are You Afraid Of?”; Wednesday, June 18). The caller also suggested that maybe I don’t know the difference between Greenwoods and Brinkworthy.

For the record, I often think about moving to Brinkworthy and I’ve been a Greenwoods volunteer for fourteen years. Moreover, I have been intimately involved with Greenwoods’ day-to-day operations as the spouse of Murray Anderson, a recent resident; and now I’m serving on the board of the Greenwoods Eldercare Society. I think it’s fair to say I would never wish to suggest that either Greenwoods or Brinkworthy is a terrible place to live. Each serves its purpose admirably and may very well serve me personally as I live out the waning years of my life.

In quoting Florence, the lovely little lady whose fragility and cognitive impairment required her to live in a long-term-care facility, I was hoping to make the following points:

- (1) “Brinkworthy” (by which Florence actually meant Greenwoods), was perhaps the only name she could think of for a residence dedicated to Seniors. However, her cognitive impairment was sufficiently advanced that she was totally unaware that Brinkworthy is a community of people over age 55 who direct their lives independently. Sadly, Florence was no longer able to do that.
- (2) Florence’s tears were expressions of her loss of the ability to live independently.
- (3) We all share Florence’s fears. There are few things worse as we grow older than the realization that we may lose our ability to chart our own paths and to keep on going more or less on our own.
- (4) Often this fear is manifested in not wanting to expose ourselves to residences like Greenwoods. “I don’t want my mom to live at Greenwoods,” someone told me recently. But fear of Greenwoods was putting an enormous strain on this woman’s father because he was the one who was caring for his cognitively-impaired wife on a 24/7 basis. I suggested the daughter take a tour of Greenwoods. Her reply: “I don’t want to go in there.”

I once had this same fear and reaction. I wouldn’t even walk in the front door to the reception desk to make a donation. As it happens, it was my promise to visit Florence that forced Donald and me to enter Greenwoods for the first time. The minute he saw it, he wanted to move in. I supported him in that desire, but it turned out he wasn’t eligible. In 1999, Greenwoods was not equipped to handle people in wheel chairs. Now they can.

My apologies to the caller and to anyone else who was offended by my column and, once again, may I suggest you check out the new Greenwoods website at greenwoodseldercare.org. Start with the photo gallery, if you like, and see all the lovely and loving faces happily engaged in a variety of activities. And then remember the famous statement of U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt: “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”

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Ganges