

The Spurrell Family Part 11: Agnes and Franklin Spurrell

Wavey's parents, Agnes and Franklin Spurrell live next door to Wavey and her family. The arrangement has worked well for both families. Wavey can check in on her aging parents and Agnes and Franklin have always been there to support Wavey and her growing family.

Franklin is 86 year old. Franklin retired as a millwright from the pulp mill 21 years ago and has been very active in his retirement. In addition to being active in Wavey's family life, he plays darts every Thursday morning at the Legion Hall and maintained his home and vegetable gardens. When asked, Franklin describes himself as being in "perfect health". He is a few pounds overweight, but he tries to eat well and walks every day when the weather is good. He stopped smoking 15 years ago after he suffered a mild heart attack. (His doctor told him to change his lifestyle). He has Type II Diabetes and takes "pills" to manage his sugars. He has problems sleeping and wakes frequently to urinate during the night. He was diagnosed with glaucoma and mild macular degeneration in his early 60s. He manages the glaucoma with "drops" twice a day. Franklin's greatest hardship has been not being able to drive because of his poor eyesight. He was in a minor accident a few years ago and since then Wavey was insistent that it was not safe for him to drive.

Agnes is 83 years old and for all her married life she was a homemaker. She was proud of her role as homemaker and was very involved in the lives of her children and grandchildren. Agnes has a number of minor health problems: she has high blood pressure and Type II Diabetes, both of which were well managed on medication. She has frequent bouts of chest pain induced by activity. She feels her chest pain is due to anxiety. She also has swelling in her feet. She was recently diagnosed with early signs of chronic renal failure.

Five years ago, however, Agnes started to develop signs of dementia and as a result she has become increasingly housebound. Her first "event" was a fall in the bathtub while showering. Her injuries were not serious and Franklin installed hand railings in the tub to help steady her balance. Since then, however, she has fallen several times, most of the time with only minor injuries. On one occasion Franklin had to take her to hospital after she fell down the stairs. While she sustained no serious injuries, the physician on duty that evening was concerned about the unusual pattern of bruising on her body. Agnes maintained it was from her fall from the back step while hanging out a load of washing.

Recently, her "forgetfulness" has been getting worse. There are occasions where she doesn't know where she is and on one occasion she did not recognize Franklin when he came home from his walk and she started yelling at him to, "get out of the house!" thinking him an intruder. On other occasions Franklin will come home from his walk and find the stove burners on and

Agnes napping on the couch. One night she left the house in the middle of the night and was found by a neighbor walking down the street in her housecoat. Franklin, normally a happy-go-lucky sort of person was starting to show signs of fatigue and stress from having to be more attentive to Agnes and her dementia.

On Thursday, instead of going to play darts down at the Legion, Franklin went to see his family doctor.

His doctor asked, "What can I do for you today Franklin?" "Just not feeling like myself lately doc", he answered.