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To: Kester, Tonykester@aging.sc.gov  
Date: 9/18/2014 3:41:19 PM  
Subject: Your Aunt Frances at Lowman

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Hi Tony,

This is your cousin, Karen. Janis and Alan have encouraged me to forward a letter to you that I wrote about Mom. We moved Mom to the rehab/skilled nursing at Lowman on August 25, and I have also asked and received for Lutheran Hospice to come be a part of her care - not that I think she's declined significantly, (well she has since moving to skilled!) but I just wanted more eyes and ears to walk thru her room at Lowman. I did contact the Ombudsman Program about how all this went down, and Melissa Yetters from Lowman has called and emailed me, and apparently has spent an inordinate amount of time on the situation - responding to the Ombudsman, talking and doing in-service training with her staff, and also writing another report about a medication issue. But like I said Janis and Alan thought it would be helpful to have your expertise and knowledge of the facts in case something else rears its ugly head. I will say that the weekend following the move I got a call about an "incident" - turns out they gave mom a prescription pain killer Saturday night, Aug. 30 - Mom does not take any regular prescriptions, period!! They did call me and call the doctor who of course said check her vitals every hour and he thought it would not affect her. When I was there this past week, I discovered her call button wasn't functioning - not that she could use it, but I needed help and I couldn't use it. They fixed it while I was there, but I guess it could have been broken for the 2 1/2 weeks she had already been there. I don't know whether you knew this or not, but dad had a life insurance policy leaving Lowman a nice little bit of change - Dad was such a strong supporter of Lowman Home ministries, and I have tried to explain to the "powers that be" that our family really, really does want to continue supporting this ministry, but we have been put through the wringer recently. Okay, so the letter below should bring you up to speed. I don't expect you to "do" anything - just be aware. Thanks for listening.

Your cousin, Karen

Dear Melissa,

I've really been pondering in my heart (as I'm prone to say a lot!) about writing this email to you. This morning at the church where I'm a member and serve as the music director, we had our annual all- staff meeting. We have a preschool program that will be beginning next Monday, and the Pastor asked the question: "Who is more difficult to deal with, the preschooler or the preschooler's parent?" I wonder if that is how you feel about the folks at Lowman - who is more difficult to deal with, the resident or the resident's family. I'm sure I, the family representative, am far more difficult to deal with, than my mother, the resident.

I was so angry last Friday at how all of this played out and am still trying to calm down about what has happened the last two weeks. I want to review the history of the last few months - and maybe my memory is faulty or maybe I have misunderstood what was supposed to happen. Last April after my mother had 4 falls and I believe it was 3 visits to the hospital, you and I sat down in your office and had what I believed to be quite a productive conversation. You gave me some options for my Mother's care - and I felt that my family was truly cared for by the ministry at Lowman. As I understood it, Mom could stay at Bethany, we would hire a Be Well sitter (and with your help all at a reduced rate), and we would revisit and reassess things in three months. That three month period in my calculations would be the end of July/beginning of August. I can truly say these last 4 months have been a respite for me in caring for my mother's affairs, and I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. There was never a question in my mind that eventually one day Mom would probably have to be moved to skilled nursing, but as you can imagine, I clinged to a small hope she might spend the rest of her days at Bethany. The Be Well sitter, Jondelyn Carlos, was a blessing. She was not the only caregiver, but she definitely was the main one. I enjoyed reading her daily log entries - how she took Mom to music activities, or a walk around the pond to see the ducks, or over to skilled nursing for a cup of tea.

So the end of July came and the beginning of August came, and I did not hear from you. I even asked the Be Well folks and Lynn Avery what was happening, and they simply said as long as everything was running smoothly to wait until I heard



something from you. I did get a call from a Whitney in Physical Therapy telling me she was going to evaluate mom at Dr. Lord's request. She called back talking about skilled nursing, but then Julie called me and said not to worry. Nothing was going to change. Then I received a message from Meredith Scott, and I thought "okay, this is it." We scheduled a meeting for 2pm on August 12. On that day I took Mom to lunch and ran into Dr. Lord. I asked her point blank what's going on, and she replied that Mom was staying the course - she indicated that it would be great if all residents at Bethany could have Be Well sitters, and all was fine. I went into the meeting with Meredith, still expecting her to suggest it was time for skilled nursing, and she told me she hoped mom would live out her days at Bethany, and with the Be Well sitter it was working. I signed the 6-month Care plan papers. I excitedly called my sisters to tell them I thought we could keep Mom at Bethany, and we were so grateful as Jondelyn was so wonderful with our Mom. Then on Monday, August 18, Meredith called me to tell me the time had come for mom to be moved. I asked what had happened over the weekend, and she really couldn't give me a definitive answer. She said she would have Patricia Beamer from skilled nursing to call me. Didn't hear anything that afternoon, nor Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. In the meantime, I contacted Lynn and Dr Lord who both suggested that we could wait until Jondelyn would return to make the transition. Finally Friday late morning Patricia called me. It seemed obvious from the outset that she did not know the history, and then she did admit she didn't have Mom's file in front of her, and she would like to call me back on a speaker phone with Meredith after she had had a chance to study the file.

Now here's where things get "dicey" as I am also prone to say. Patricia said some things to me that I found hard to hear coming from someone who is a staff member at a Lutheran supported ministry - please let me underline ministry. I think I was pretty clear - my husband was listening to my side of the conversation, and he agreed I stated my case several times, yes, we would move her to skilled nursing, but this could not have been a worse time - I told her several times I was not questioning the move to skilled nursing. I was just asking the timing of all of this. If we had had this discussion earlier in the month of August my sister from Florida would have been around to help with the move and decision making, but she had already returned home. I wanted to have 2-3 weeks as I am heading out to San Antonio this weekend to visit my son, then the following week my church music programs of 12 choirs including a choir retreat on Sept 5-6 begins, and Jondelyn, who unfortunately, had to be out of town to care for a family member for 17 days, would be returning. All I was asking for was a couple of more weeks to make arrangements and have Jondelyn present during the transition. I still did not understand why in a week's time, there had been this massive 180 degree turnaround. Still I hadn't heard from you, and you were the one with whom I had the original agreement. When I even suggested to Patricia that I thought I was supposed to have at least 14 days, she responded (in not the nicest tone) that I had already had 4 months. And probably the worst stinger is that she said "This (4 month period I assume) was a gift!" from Lowman Home to our family. She also suggested that if the building were burning down, how would I like my mother to perish there because she would not be able to assist in her own transfer.

She asked if I trusted the Lowman Home, and that if I didn't I certainly had other options - I'm not quite sure what she meant by that, but it seemed she was suggesting I move my mother from the facility all together, but again in the meantime Lowman staff would be moving mom. Both she and Meredith said that of course "Be Well" could come over to skilled nursing. I might have responded (in not my nicest tone) what money bags were growing in her back yard that one could afford that. We are already paying skilled nursing prices (Lowman fees plus Be Well) but have "one on one" attention that is priceless. And no, of course, Patricia could not guarantee mom would get that kind of attention in skilled. She stated that Lowman would move Mom themselves without me. There has never ever been a move of my parents where one of the family has not been present to assist in the transition, and I told her that there would be no move without my presence, and that I insisted on picking out her room. So after our much heated discussion, I suggested that since I was already planning to come down that evening (our discussion delayed my even leaving for an hour) that we move mother the very next day - but oh no, they couldn't possibly do that because of the TB test. And I said if you were so certain about the move why didn't you go ahead and perform the test earlier in the week, to which Meredith said she was waiting for me to discuss things with my siblings. What the heck was I going to discuss with them that would delay the move in Patricia or Meredith's eyes. All I was going to do was report that we had to move mom - I didn't know if any of my sisters would be available to help. If Patricia had called me in a timely fashion instead of waiting 4 days, we could have moved mom on Saturday, and I and my husband would not have had to each take a day off from work, and my sister Ann and I would not have had to make two round trips down to Columbia and back.

So we finally come to an agreement, 9am Monday morning - Scott, Ann, and myself take a tour of skilled nursing to look at rooms on Saturday morning. We make our 1st, 2nd, 3rd choices. Ann and I pack up Mom's clothes in the chest that will be moved over there. Meredith calls Sunday to ask if we can make it 10am (now mind you, none of my pleas for a change of times has been heeded). Okay, sure we'll be there at 10. At 8am I get a call from the director of Be Well saying the sitter has been instructed to pack up Mom's clothes. Well, that's wrong on so many levels - that's not her job, the family employs her not Lowman, and my sister and I had already taken care of it. Meredith said she would find out who made that suggestion and "educate" them. (I'm hopeful that someone will "educate" Patricia about being a care giver to families as well as residents!) So the move is made. The intake nurse is asking all sorts of questions like what medicines does Mom take, how tall is she - finally after the total frustration of it all, I asked don't you guys talk to one another - don't you have all of that information in the medical records from Bethany? The CNA who came in to take mom to the bathroom was not wearing a nametag which was probably a good thing because she really, really did not seem to be thrilled that a new resident was in 112-B and that she had another resident in her charge, and if I knew her name, I'd be listing it right now for you, too. Patricia Beamer stopped by briefly (first time I'd ever set eyes on her) - I told Victoria (who is the saint of all saints in all of this) that I really would have a hard time if Patricia would be part of the care meetings for Mom - she said she would not be the one to do that. Patricia asked if we needed anything, but did not introduce herself as the one I'd spoken with on Friday. I asked her point blank. At the very least you'd think she would have said something like I'm sorry we got off on the wrong foot or I know this was a hardship for you or something to acknowledge our previous conversation, but she just flitted away. Melissa, I just



cannot tell you how ugly that conversation went on Friday - Scott told me he had never heard me like that before - and I don't think I can remember the last time I have been quite so agitated. I have not slept the last 4 nights - I want my mother to be safe and cared for. When Patricia asked me whether I trust Lowman to take care of my mother, all those memories came flooding back of pressing that call button for my father with no one responding and me yelling at the nurses' station, and of him crying out for an hour before someone found him fallen by his bedside. My mother will not be able to press the call button and she will not yell out- she is helpless, and I feel like Patricia was extraordinarily insensitive to the issues - having waited to return my call for several days, not being prepared with my mother's file in front of her or having done her homework before calling me, and then insisting that the move be done this week.

The only other thing I can add to this saga is that I told 5 different aids at Bethany that we were moving mom - that's all I said - we're moving mom on Monday, and everyone of them was surprised - a couple even saying that mom was so easy to care for, they did not understand why she had to be moved.

So now when I go visit my mother, I must walk down the very same hall I used to walk down to see my father. My father said when he moved to skilled nursing that this was the place where people go to die. You know my mom only lived in Boliek for about 7 weeks before moving to Bethany. The day dad took her over to Bethany he thought he would have lunch with her and then just gently slip out. David Leaver met him over there. They got mom situated for lunch, and then David took my father over to the Bistro and ate lunch with him. My dad indicated that they cried together. That is what ministry is - when a staff person is no longer a staff person, but a minister, a friend, a prayer companion - someone to share your grief of never being able to sleep with your partner of close to 70 years ever again. I know everything is going to be okay. I know Mom will be looked after. She has a sweet roommate, and Sherill (she's the only nurse I've dealt with so far) and Renata both seem quite capable and quite nice. I pray that your grandmother will transition well too and eat heartily. I hope we can sit down for a cup of coffee sometime in the near future.

Grace and peace,  
Karen Kester Areheart Ives