

## **One Woman's Story - You Choose the Ending**

by Sue Knobloch, Evergreen Marketing Coordinator

*Does this story sound familiar? It happens all the time.  
Which ending would you choose?*

The woman thought the retirement community was wonderful – beautiful accommodations, an attractive campus, lots of fun things to do, and great people to do it with. BUT – she didn't want to leave her home. She wanted to stay in her nice four-bedroom home with the memories that were so important to her.

Never mind that the stairs were getting to be too much – hard to get to the basement laundry especially. She could make it if she went slow and hung on tight. And it wasn't that she couldn't do the lawn work any longer – her son came as often as he could to do that for her. And the car – she could still drive, although she was a little nervous at night ... or when it rained ... or snowed. She didn't realize that she rarely went out anymore, but the darkness did seem to be coming earlier and the winters seemed to be getting longer.

Another thing she didn't notice was that the house was starting to get a little run-down. Her eyes just weren't what they used to be, so she didn't see that the carpets were getting worn, or the paint on the front of the house was starting to peel. Housework was never a favorite activity, but now it was getting to be a real chore, so maybe it was best that she didn't see how dirty the windows were and the cobwebs collecting in the corners.

But she loved her home – and the memories of her husband and children. And she needed this big house! Sometimes the children would come for a visit and bring their growing families. At Christmas; maybe on her birthday; and where would they stay if not in this house? She herself was really living in just a few rooms – it was getting harder to get upstairs and was so much easier to sleep downstairs in the small sitting room. She had everything she needed right there – the kitchen and the half-bath. She couldn't really get in and out of the bathtub upstairs anyway. And she didn't even use the living room as she preferred to watch TV right in her comfy chair in her sitting-room-turned-bedroom.

Her hair was a little unruly - she couldn't get out to the hairdresser as often as she would like. She missed several appointments when the weather was bad. And although she still made her own meals, you couldn't really call it cooking. More like a piece of toast, maybe some canned soup and crackers. She wished she had some fresh fruit to put on her cereal, but she didn't get to the grocery store every week any more – too hard to park the car and walk through that big parking lot. So often her cupboard was actually quite bare.

She did get lonely, in fact was lonely most of the time. The house was so quiet, the phone seldom rang, and her only visitors were her children who stopped by every

now and then to check on her. She assured them she was fine. Luckily they didn't notice the bruise on her arm this week – just a small bump from when she tripped on a throw rug the other day. And they wanted to believe her – that she was okay. It was so much easier that way.

**You Choose the Ending.** In the back of their minds, did the woman and her family really know what was happening? That living in her own home was no longer fulfilling her needs? That the house was too big, she had no socialization, a poor diet, and most of all that it was becoming unsafe for her to live alone? It had all happened so gradually, but how does this story end? You choose.

**End of the story 1)** The woman could not let go of her house. Her family checked on her as they were able, but with their own families and jobs it was difficult to make time. The woman lived several more years, still lonely, getting a little weaker each year. She had a lot of time on her hands to recall the wonderful memories of days gone by.

**End of the story 2)** The woman and her children realized that the benefits of living in a senior retirement community far outweighed those of keeping her house. She was able to bring her memories with her – through the photos she hung on her new walls, her comfy chair where she loved to watch TV, her own bed with the quilt she made so many years ago, and other meaningful special items. She started feeling more energetic, in part due to healthy meals. She joined the community choir and took a beginning class in the Art Center. She had so many friends – she was never lonely. But she could still curl up in her own comfy chair and watch her own TV in her own little living room – in her new “house” that was just her size. The woman lived several more years, seldom lonely, enjoying her life. When she had time on her hands she only had to look at the photos on the wall to recall old memories, and think back a few hours to ponder the new memories she had made that day.