

Henry Williams Monologue Script

(stops frequently during his story to breathe, O2 nasal cannula, coughs, appears hypoxic)

Hello, my name is Henry Williams. Life sure has changed over the last two, three years, retirement just isn't what we thought it would be... we... that would be Ertha and me. I spent my life working for the Transit Department, as an engineer for the rail system. I'm pretty proud of this accomplishment. I was on the forefront of desegregation in college and the workplace. Ertha and I have always been active and independent, so we thought we would retire to this nice apartment and do some traveling since it's just the two of us. We haven't done much of this with my health and now Ertha's. It's been a change moving from our nice home and gardens to an apartment but we have adjusted to that OK, I guess.

We lost our only son 10 years ago to the Gulf war – that really changed our lives as well; I don't think Ertha has ever been the same. He left us a lovely daughter-in-law, Betty and a grandson, Ty, but they live a couple of hours away in the city and it's hard for us to get there. And now, Ertha is getting forgetful and it's hard to leave her. We go to the Baptist church regularly but I can't let Ertha go alone to the ladies' stuff anymore. She used to go every Tuesday. But I guess you are here to learn more about me and what's going on with my health.

Well, no one could tell me to stop smoking you know, especially when I was younger. I started smoking when I was a teenager, everyone smoked back then. I have had frequent 'bouts of colds, bronchitis, asthma and so forth but now they tell me it's COPD, whatever that means, but it sounds scary. I also have a little high blood pressure, but it's not too bad.

I get so anxious now and I'm worried all the time about my wife, she is good some days and other days she can't remember things and she asks for Anthony, our son. That is so upsetting for both of us and she cries when I tell her he is gone. He was so proud to be in the armed forces but he had to go and serve overseas, he never came home to us.

I really lose my patience sometimes with Ertha. She forgets the stove is on, can't find her keys, forgets what day it is, and thinks Betty and Ty haven't visited us in years, when they were just here. I've had to watch her when she cooks, take her with me on walks. We just can't be apart and that gets frustrating. I worked every day so we were busy until we retired, now all of this heartache. Betty took Ertha home with her while I am sick here in the hospital but we need to think about a new plan so Ertha is cared for and I am too. I don't want a nursing home but I hear there are some of those apartments where they help you some. Maybe that would be a good place for us.

I sure feel bad today; I am so tired and short of breath. The doctor sent me here last night after I called his office and told him I couldn't catch my breath. My neighbor was home so she brought us in to the emergency room and took care of Ertha until Betty got here. I should be resting now; Ertha is in good hands with Betty the next few days, Betty is a nurse and can help her while I am in the hospital. I need to get some strength back. I hope my insurance will pay for this oxygen and these inhaler things I have to use when I go home. I already take two pills for my high blood pressure and a cholesterol pill, aspirin and a breathing pill. Now they want to add inhalers and oxygen? What next? I already have an inhaler I use at home and it doesn't help. Ertha needs to take a bunch of pills too.

The social worker lady said we might have to go on a waiting list before we can go into those apartments where they help you with a bath and some food. Ertha doesn't eat so well and can't cook so well anymore so help would be nice. I suppose they will put me on some diet for my breathing now and Ertha can't manage that so we could let them do our meals. I wonder if they help with the medications and baths. Ertha gets upset when I make her shower. I have to rest now; you will have to ask me questions later.