

## THE MAGIC OF MUSIC

By

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Sitting quietly with her coffee, my wife Sandy sings the songs of our youth all playing softly on our stereo. She does not miss a word. She seems to know them all by heart. Her singing makes our mornings special and allows me, be it just for a moment, to forget that Sandy is living with Alzheimer's. The morning is special for us.

Sandy and I met in 1975. It did not take us long to realize that despite growing up in two very different parts of New York – Sandy in the small town of Maybrook and I in Brooklyn – we shared a very similar taste in music. Both growing up and entering adulthood listening, singing and dancing to The Platters, Peter Paul and Mary, Simon and Garfunkel, The Kingston Trio and Carole King among others.

Memory loss entered our lives in 2007 with a diagnosis of Mild Cognitive Impairment. For the most part MCI did not alter our lives. We continued traveling and working and generally having a good time. Clearly we had problems but they were all manageable. My wife stayed physically active and played every computer game available. The games and the exercises came with us on business trips and vacations. Alzheimer's entered our lives in 2012 and while our life still seemed manageable, it clearly became more complicated and eventually we understood that changes needed to be made in how we lived. Alzheimer's is one of those diseases that does not get better. It can be stalled, held back, but eventually it takes you. You become its prisoner. How fast it progresses varies by individual but there is no escape. As it tightened its grip, my wife became less active and the computer games and exercises were now seen as boring and a waste of

time. We searched for options, something that would make life a bit easier and give my wife some pleasure. It took us a while to appreciate that the music of our youth could play a significant role in easing the trauma of this disease. We moved from our favorite CD's to building our own Sandy specific music list. With the advent of Pandora, Spotify, Apple Music and Amazon we now could listen not only to our favorite artists but to our favorite individual songs. We built three sets of music. The first and still most frequently listened to was our morning music, which is a list of forty songs beginning with Scarlet Ribbons by the Kingston Trio and in a bow to more contemporary artists, ending with Josh Groban's You Raise Me Up. With the morning music, we not only sing along but occasionally will dance to the Platters. This initial list was soon followed by a second and third song list. The second, a compilation from a chorus for those with memory issues in which Sandy participates.

The music provides our afternoon respite and ending in the evening with some of our favorite love songs. My objective, with all of this music, is to create a moment that allows us to move Alzheimer's out of our life even if it be for just a few minutes.

If you have any doubt, the literature is replete with articles on the value of music to those living with Alzheimer's. Have fun, become your own disc jockey.

### **The Writer**

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