

# Throwing Caution to the Wind

By Pamela Spahr



*I write a lot of articles and blogs about caregiving and often it is about the more difficult side of managing elders or those with brain impairments. But for me, it's not all about work. Oftentimes, I have a lot of fun with my husband, Bob.*

He has middle stage Alzheimer's disease and I've been his caregiver for several years now. Sometimes we just throw caution to the wind and we have an adventure.

Several weeks ago, we went to the Scottish Games in Pleasanton, California. Usually we don't go to fairs and festivals because they're too crowded and very often people with dementia don't do well in crowds. But, as I said, we threw caution to the wind.

I wrestled the wheelchair into the car, packed up our sunscreen and hats and off we went. With attendance of over 50,000 people in two days of Scottish tradition and competition, the event parking is always bad. We ended up parking more than half a mile away from the fairgrounds in a dirt siding next to the train track.

**Bob was excited and impatient** about getting to the event. As I pushed the wheelchair along the sidewalk near the fairgrounds, we could hear the bagpipes. What a thrill!

Bob's ears perked up. He sat up straighter and his head swiveled around to try to see the bands. We went through the turnstile and rolled into the Glen of the Clans where the clan tents were pitched.

This area draws in all matter of interested spectators, including Bob. He had a chance to talk with people from the St. Andrew's Society and the Caledonian Club. He has belonged to both for decades. He was enjoying himself so much. He was so bright and cheerful and eager to be part of the excitement.

I pushed him over to the area where the bagpipe bands were practicing. After a while, I wanted to move on

to the competitions but Bob wanted to stay. In fact, he wheeled himself over to the pavement's edge to be closer to the bands.

There were at least five bands in that particular grassy area of the field. They were all tuning up and practicing for the afternoon competitions. The cacophony was so loud and strident and so exciting. You really had to be there to feel the excitement.

After a while, Bob insisted that I sit in the wheelchair. He pushed me around in circles. Then, he pushed me over bumps and branches and we ran off the edge of the pavement and almost tipped over. I laughed and teased him outrageously. We had so much fun!

**And what would a day out be** without an ice cream cone. Next to a food cart, we sat in peace and quiet and enjoyed huge ice cream cones. He was fascinated by the chocolate and vanilla striped ice cream that dripped over the sides of the waffle cone. YUMMY!

By the time we arrived back at the car, Bob was so tired that he could hardly pull himself into the passenger's seat. He was asleep by the time we drove on to the freeway. He dozed most of the way home. And, even though it took him several days to recuperate from our adventure, I'd gladly do it again. After all, this is the fun side of caregiving.

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