

# A Caregiver's Homage To The Very Old

*by* Jerry Ratch

When you take her grocery shopping  
take a list and make her stick to it  
as she forgets and duplicates a lot  
She is also very generous  
and will insist on buying you something

I think she cannot live without fresh flowers  
or plants that are blooming. She loves a garden  
and has no seasonal sense  
About privacy — set limits right away  
or you won't pass your exams  
You may have to remind her daily for awhile

Fortunately her bedtime is around 7 p.m.  
When she visits in the early a.m. I send her home  
but then often find her crying

With a little supervision she can make her own coffee  
She needs a small fridge to store OJ, milk, ice cream, diet Coke  
and fruit  
especially grapefruit and tomatoes  
She loves cookies, candy and bear-claws  
and munches a lot  
I figure nutrition is not her problem

Her meals consist of one generous tablespoon  
of three or four items, especially tomatoes peeled  
and cut small, and peeled cucumbers  
If she doesn't have a sliver of some meat at noon

she *"hasn't eaten"*

Thank God she loves baked potatoes  
She will also eat Marie Callender's pot pies  
She'll split half with you

Supper she will eat what you do, only small portions  
She eats more if she eats with someone  
Tapioca pudding and chocolate pudding  
watermelon, and cantaloupe are favorite desserts  
and if she eats ice cream  
she likes a bit of coffee to warm up

Make some excuse, but don't let her loose in your kitchen  
She will act furious if you offer to do something for her  
She can help chop, or setting table  
and at night I sit her down to a glass of wine  
that I buy in a big box — White Zin  
She occasionally likes a Budweiser

Left alone, she forgets to eat  
clean up after herself, change clothes, loses her shoes  
and forgets who you are and where she is  
She's a loving 4-year-old, and you must say NO and mean it  
no mater how much age difference there is  
If she says she is lonely, she's probably bored

She likes picture magazines and short, light books  
and peruses catalogs. She likes short drives  
and will wait in the car if it's not too hot  
Wal-Mart is fine if you give her a sundae  
and tell her to stay in the food section. Also Costco

She will never nap lying down  
but all the time sitting up  
Put a thick towel on the seat

She is safe with knives and is very careful of steps  
if she has nothing in her hands  
Both hands should be used for balance

Also getting in and out of cars  
she must have her hands empty as her right knee  
hurts with bending or bearing weight  
She has a cane and should be encouraged to use it  
I have her trained not to carry her purse in the store  
it's too heavy and cumbersome

If she falls, she falls —  
you are not God  
and she has lived her life

