

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

