

MAMA AND ME

By: Berniece Nash Neeley

I was 42 when Mama died 40 years ago at age 75. It was 1969. At age 60 she had her first transient ischemic attack (TIA, commonly known as a small stroke). As she was saying her morning prayer, she noticed her words were garbled. She had several more TIAs before she died. Mama never learned to drive a car. My two sisters lived in Logan, Utah, and Mesa, Washington, so it was my pleasure to take Mama to the doctor's office and get groceries, etc. As time went on, we decided to hire a lady to come in to do light housework and fix meals. We were fortunate to find a congenial lady who came three or four days a week.

Mama busied herself with walking to her weekly beauty shop appointments, walking to and from church and Relief Society every week, and particularly enjoyed the daytime and evening TV game shows. She also enjoyed TV mysteries such as *Perry Mason* and *Mattock*. She enjoyed knitting as she watched television. She enjoyed the daily newspaper and read two or three monthly magazines. She wrote her family every week and corresponded with others on birthdays, Christmas, etc. I would say she "aged gracefully." I hope I can do the same!

If Mama had lived in the 21st century, she may have attended a senior center but if they were available "in those days," we were unaware of them. If "meals on wheels" had been - available, that might have solved the problem of hiring someone to fix her meals. We are fortunate to have this type of service in the 21st century.

I think attitudes toward the elderly have changed significantly since 1969. There are places for the elderly to live such as assisted living facilities and skilled nursing facilities. There are many choices available. There is no stigma when a person decides to live in one of these places. People are living longer. It is not unusual to learn of people who have celebrated their 60th and 65th wedding anniversaries, to say nothing of people who live to be 90 or 95 or even 100, in good health. I think health care is better and people are more aware of what they need to do to be healthy.

I'm glad I live in the 21st century. At age 82, I am fortunate to be able to stay somewhat active. (Unfortunately, I have physical limitations.) The senior center I go to (the Columbus Center) has interesting activities. I particularly enjoy the monthly book club as well as some of the special programs. I am fortunate not to have to pay for a ride to and from the center. The City of South Salt Lake underwrites the services of a van that takes people like me to and from the center. Things have changed since 40 years ago. I'm glad! I hope I can age as gracefully as Mama did.