

*I met a lovely couple, both in their 80s, who had recently moved to a retirement apartment community. They had no children and no other family around. The husband became ill, was hospitalized, and then went to a nursing facility located next door to their apartment community for rehabilitation. The wife required the use of a walker. It was unsafe for her to walk by herself from their apartment to the nursing facility. She was dependent on others to drive her next door for daily visits with her husband. The couple's Power of Attorney thought she shouldn't go to see her husband every day, but the nursing home administrator helped arrange for the apartment community's car service to provide a ride for the wife each day. This gave her less than two hours with her husband because she didn't get picked up until 1:00 and had to be in the lobby of the nursing home prior to 3:00 to wait for the driver. She counted the minutes.*

*I talked to both of them often and could see the husband declining. One day I visited with the wife in their apartment. She was distressed about her husband's health and wanted to spend more time with him. I asked if it would be okay with her if I could try and help. She said yes. I went to the administrator to ask if staff could possibly walk the wife over to see her husband and then walk back and get her for lunch and a little rest. Because the apartment community's car service is unavailable in the morning, I approached the administrator to help the wife. We developed a plan. Staff would be asked to walk the wife over to see her husband at 9:00 a.m. and go back for her between 11:00 and 12:00. I asked if the wife could stay later than 3:00 in the afternoon. I was told this would be a battle but that they would agree to try. The next day, the staff followed through with the arrangement and allowed the wife to stay until 4:30 p.m. That night the husband died. I went to visit with the wife in their apartment the next day. We had a long, lovely visit. She was of course devastated by her husband's death but filled with joy that she had been able to spend seven hours with her beloved husband on his last day of life.*