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To the Oak Ridge Staff and Prospective Assisted Care Residents and their Families:

Although my family and I value and try to preserve our privacy, out of an overwhelming sense of gratitude as well as a desire to assist others considering the potential move to an assisted living residence, we have decided to speak about our family's experience at Oak Ridge and to give our permission for them to share, as they so choose, that experience.

Our mother, Zelda Ratliff, moved to Oak Ridge nearly six years ago. It wasn't a difficult decision. She needed assistance with her daily needs. Her friends were already residents there and liked and recommended it. A brief visit to confirm this, select a room, then sign the paperwork and the arrangements were complete. It would be a new chapter in mom's life and ours as well. Little did we know at that time what a monumental decision we had made and how we would later come to that realization.

"Time marches on." The faces of the residents at Oak Ridge changed but there were always familiar ones: fellow church members, lifetime friends and their spouses, teachers, all glad to greet you and have a brief chat. Remarkably though, I noticed that except for a retirement or family move, the friendly and familiar faces of the staff for the most part, stayed the same, which I have found, is often owing to being valued, satisfied and treated fairly. These staff members were my mother's caregivers, friends and extended family.

My mother's health declined with age but her daily activities continued and her attitude remained positive. Then suddenly, she required hospitalization and we realized that her time with us was short. The staff of Oak Ridge kept in close contact with mother and with us during her hospital stay. Messages were sent. Prayers were offered. One staff manager who was by coincidence hospitalized a few doors away, learned of mother's condition and although recently post multiple surgeries, told her nurse, "You have to take me to see my friend." It was arranged. There were hugs, tears, and rejoicing.

We were then facing the necessity of "placement" albeit probably short term, in another facility with hopefully qualified staff, but likely crowded and noisy, and undoubtedly completely unfamiliar to mom and us.

During one of those text messages with a staff nurse, I mentioned the stress of the "placement" process. The nurse asked if we wanted her care continued at Oak Ridge. And on one of the darkest and gloomiest days of our family's lives, a ray of sunshine pierced the gloom. "We want her to come back home so we can care for her here." Our concerns about newly required bedding and supplies were wiped away. Oak Ridge management coordinated everything with hospice staff and all was in place and ready for mom the next morning. The move took place seamlessly and when the nurse welcomed mom back to her room, mom's one word response was "Fantastic!" During the next few days, residents visited and offered prayers. Staff continually and with sincere love and compassion cared for mom. They came to her room on their breaks to visit and brought meals to sustain us. It became obvious that they were caring for us as well as mom.

Mom's inevitable but peaceful passing was largely due to their heroic efforts. These caring staff are God's hands on this earth and as mom was fond of saying, "I wouldn't have taken a farm in Texas for any of them." Our family know all of them by name and we are thanking them personally.

And so now my family and I trust that the reader of this letter understands why our family now realizes what a monumental decision we made nearly six years ago and hope that our shared experience will help some other family in their considerations.

With greatest appreciation,

The family of Zelda Ratliff

 6/3/2023