

SOMETIMES FOR THEM--SOMETIMES FOR ME

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[Assignment: Write an essay in which you classify or divide into groups types of people you have worked with, or analyze the categories of jobs within a business, or categorize the motives for which people work. Be sure that the classes or parts you discuss are distinct from each other and that they represent all the parts of your subject.]

(1) Many elderly people confined in nursing homes seem uninteresting or demanding because they are picky, crabby, or just never awake. Once we take time to get to know the elderly, however, we can more easily understand and more readily appreciate them. In my experiences as a housekeeper at Countryside Place Nursing Home, I came in contact with four different types of people: those who couldn't wait to have their rooms cleaned, those who hated having it done, those who waited for me just to have someone to talk to, and those who were so sick they never knew if or when I was there. Although many people dread the thought of cleaning, my job as a housekeeper at the nursing home not only put humor into a money-making situation, but it also gave me a sense of satisfaction to know that in performing a minimal task I was often making someone's day, or at least expanding my understanding and tolerance of people.

(2) I'll start with describing the anxious ones, because the lady I remember best was so impatient about having her room straightened. She never understood that I punched in at 2:00 p.m., and it took me about five minutes to get upstairs and get water in the buckets. Nevertheless, if I was not upstairs exactly at 2:00, Mary Worrell was roaming the halls looking for me. As soon as I got to her room, she would smile and say, "Good, you're here. I thought you weren't coming." After about five minutes of work she would remind me to check her soap and paper towel containers which, as usual, I had already done. Since Mary was deaf, I couldn't tell her that; I would just nod and go and do it again so she could see me. And Mary insisted on having the cleaning rag rung out repeatedly while I was dusting. To me it was a waste of time, but she was the resident so I couldn't argue.

(3) Then there was Winnifred Schoof. While I was attempting to complete the simple job of washing off her desk, she would watch at eye level telling me all the spots I had missed. What she couldn't understand was that the air dried the water from the desk as I went, so it was never all wet at the same time. She would often remark snidely, "Honey, you missed a spot." What I usually ended up doing was wiping the dry spots until I could think of something to distract her attention from the desktop. And I can't forget Edith Johnson who made sure I got every particle of dust, because she was positive that it was the condition of the room that

caused her to sneeze. Although I often became quite irritated by all their complaining, I always had a change of heart when the residents sincerely thanked me after I had finished their rooms. Mary Morrell, in particular, made a point to ask, "Will you be back tomorrow?" If I nodded yes, she would smile and mutter, "Good! Good!"

(4) If the picky people weren't challenging enough, there were the people who absolutely detested having their rooms cleaned. Most of the time they made me aware of this verbally. For instance, I was always disrupting Harold Spears' day. As soon as I walked into his room he would remark, "What are you gonna do now?" He couldn't comprehend why I had to be in his room when he wanted privacy. And Adeline Waters always told me, "You don't need to clean. I won't tell, 'cause it's not that dirty." She was never rude, but it was obvious that she would rather not have me there.

(5) Now for the worst: Ollie. Talk about a terror. When I first began working, he had me in tears almost every day. One day in particular, he did not want his floor mopped. I can still hear him yelling while I was washing the tables, "I'm watching you, God damn it. And you better not get a drop of water on my floor." His tone of voice told me he really meant what he said. No matter how long I tried to explain that it was my job and I had to do it, he continued to scream. It was so embarrassing because it seemed as if everyone could hear him yelling at me. I especially disliked it when he would swear, and believe me he knew every word in the book. After a few minutes of his swearing, I would decide that it was impossible for him to get any more abusive, so I would ignore him and go on with my work.

(6) I could never figure out who or which type made me feel worse, the angry ones or the ones who never realized who I was. Marion Cambell never said a word to me or gave me any indication that he knew I was there, but still I would talk to him, telling him my stories and asking him questions in case, by chance, he could hear what I was saying. And Ralph always thought I was the nurse, asking me to take him to the bathroom. Of course, he'd keep asking even after I tried to tell him that I couldn't. In fact, I would have done it to satisfy him if it had been allowed. Since it wasn't, I usually felt guilty leaving to continue my work while the poor man was uncomfortable. But even if I was never recognized, I knew cleaning these rooms was important.

(7) I've saved the best for last: the people who wanted me to come just so there was someone there to listen and talk to them. I loved talking to Myrtle even though she told me the same stories about her adopted children everytime I was in her room. And on Sundays, she would tell me how sorry she felt that I had to work on the holy day. Lena Michaels was the friendliest lady,

she always had something nice to say. Like Myrtle, she too, often repeated herself. She would often ask me, "Did I tell you my grandson was asking about you?" If someone walked in the room in the middle of her reminding me, she'd announce, "Danny's got his eye on Melissa. He always asks about her when he comes for a visit." And I can't forget Charles; he usually had something to give to me, most of the time some sort of candy. He was funny, too; he tended to act as if he were deaf when he had no interest in what I was saying. Then I would make him laugh by telling him I knew he could hear me so he'd better answer. He would answer with a cocky grin and a tilted head, but the next time he would try the same stunt. I actually looked forward to work so I could talk to those people who were lonely and wanted attention.

(8) Sometimes the people realized that I cleaned their rooms and sometimes they didn't, but either way I got satisfaction. Fortunately for me, it didn't matter what the resident felt about having his or her room cleaned, I always felt appreciated or needed and completely content.