

A Unique Wedding July 2013

by **Tanya Bodzin**

The location is the Glenbridge Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Niles, Illinois. The bride wears a beautiful gown of white satin and lace. Her veil has a lovely tiara of flowers, satin and white lace. Her bouquet of flowers is a combination of beautiful white roses and other white flowers tied with a blue satin ribbon. Her smile adorns her face and she beams with happiness. The bride is 63 years old and never married. She uses a wheel chair and a walker. She has some mental health issues. She is a resident of this rehabilitation and nursing home.



The groom, my husband's kid brother, is 60 years old and uses a walker to help him move. He is wearing a blue cotton short sleeved sport shirt, sporting a boutonniere, and dark pants. His smile is large and sweat beads up on his forehead even as he sits quietly before the wedding ceremony begins. When he sees his two brothers approach, he gets up, shaking, and gives each a big bear hug. To his two sisters-in-law he gives a kiss on the cheek. He says he is so glad that we are here for his wedding. We are the only family here for this, his third wedding. He has grown children but neither of them is in attendance. He uses a walker, has some mental deficiencies, and is a resident of the same rehabilitation and nursing home.

The bride and groom met about a year ago although they had been living in the same building for three years. They both have physical disabilities that don't stop them from having a good time. The groom has recovered from a stroke and a grand mal seizure. Three years ago the admitting doctor at the hospital told him he wasn't going to live. Recently, when this same doctor of three years ago came by to see him, he told the groom he should be dead and why was he alive? The groom replied, "I am a Bodzin, and we Bodzins don't give up!"

The bride's brother is physically disabled and has a girl friend of 22 years who also has disabilities. They have gentle smiles on their faces throughout the ceremony.

The bride has two bridesmaids. They are dressed in navy blue with a halo of flowers on their heads. Each one is pushed down the aisle in their wheelchairs. One is getting married next week.

The bride and the groom come into the large party room pushing their walkers and then take their place on a small settee covered in blue flowered fabric that matches the tablecloths. They seat themselves on the settee and the rabbi turns to them and welcomes all those who will bear witness to this unique wedding. He explains this is a Jewish wedding, the importance of a large beautiful wine goblet of Spode, a large floral decorated Ketubah, the special gifts of the bride and the groom, and how they came to this point in their lives. The audience is comprised of women and men who work in the nursing home and some of the residents who are using wheelchairs or walkers. It is a gathering of about 30 people who will celebrate Lois and Neil's wedding. The vows are said, the rings exchanged, and the couple drink from the goblet. Sheva Brochot are sung in English and Hebrew, and the groom breaks the glass and everyone yells, "Mazel Tov." The music swells as the bride and groom walk to the back of the room using their walkers, their faces beaming. They have been quite an item at the nursing home for more than a year and at one time had been told to cool their amorous ways in public.

The reception is held in the same room as the ceremony; where there is a head table. There is a huge 5 tiered chocolate wedding cake covered in chocolate icing and blue flowers. The ice cream is mint chocolate chip and chocolate chip. After the reception, the left over cake and ice cream will be offered to the residents of the nursing home.

The bride and groom open their presents and thank everyone for coming. The music is played and people are dancing, but not the bride and groom. It is a frailach wedding, and I watch with my eyes tearing with happiness. Lois and Neil are smiling at each other, and everyone who stops by to congratulate them on their marriage.

We wait in the lobby of the nursing home while they get their medications, their insulin and paraphernalia. We watch as they put the walkers in the trunk of the large car and then sit down in the back seat, ready to be chauffeured to a hotel for their wedding night.

My sister-in-law from Detroit, Lois's guardian, and I watch them drive away. They are beginning their life as a married couple. When they return the next

day to the nursing home they will share one room as a couple. They will have all the assisted care that they need.

This was a unique and wonderful wedding. Not everyone can find love and joy in marriage in a nursing home during the last chapters of their lives.