



# A Witness in Court

## Part One

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*You may wonder what it is like to be in an old people's home where there are strict rules and a rigid routine, where disabled people are treated roughly, food is set before them with no help to eat it, where there is an unpleasant smell and frail people are left to suffer the consequences of incontinence, and nobody ever smiles. I'm sorry I can't help you because I have never been in such a place.*

A little more than a year ago, a rather pale pathetic sight, I arrived at Flat 34 Finborough Court, and this is my witness.

It took about two weeks to find my way about and discover who was who. This was not at all difficult because staff and residents alike were all ready and willing to put me right. I found that the standard routine was lunch and high tea, and a 40 minute service each morning, Monday to Friday.

### Good food!

At my first meal I sat with two gentlemen and none of us spoke. Clearly they were wary of this unknown quantity. On reflection, I realised that even this was preferable to meals on my own. But this quiet time proved to be unusual. Often there is laughter, each table wondering what is amusing the others. As you might expect, many

of the diners have bad hearing. As a result of attempts to understand one another, sometimes the decibels rise ensuring that nobody can hear anyway. It's not always like that, and my own penetrating voice makes a contribution.

But what about the food? Served from a 5 star kitchen, it is always tasty and there is always plenty of it. When I came here I had a very poor appetite, but before long I was clearing my plate. But not only is the food good, it is served in a friendly way and every effort is made to please individual tastes. We have a choice of two dishes for lunch. One day there was cheese on toast for high tea. Unhappy with cheese I asked for a sandwich without explaining why. When they arrived, alas they were cheese filled! Good try, but not to worry, they then produced jam sandwiches. No problem!

### Prayer and Share

On Sundays (at 4pm) and Monday mornings our services are conducted by visitors. The Thursday morning session is in the form of Prayer and Share. This is usually well-attended and is remarkable for bringing to life dear people, who in the normal way, spend a lot of time sitting in the lounge with their eyes closed! They choose hymns and lead in prayers, often reflecting deep spiritual thought and concern. They love to sing choruses that evoke childhood

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memories – this ties in with a display of war-time memories.

A number of residents bring in their talents and use them for the common good. Some are pianists. One man has his piano accordion – he is too frail to lift it on himself but when once it is in place it is difficult to rein him in! Another man has a great gift of communication; he can sit by people in all conditions of mind or body, and 'chat them up'.

There are the organisers and those who delight to wait on others, as well as the jokers and the artists who produce greetings cards and sensory quilts. One lady acts as our precentor (it is the correct spelling!) when musicians can't find a tune, and another who exercises her gardening skills by cultivating a corner of the walled garden with a continuous display of colour.

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