

GEORGE AND THE SAUSAGE ROLL

A WELSH TALE

My family has lived on different continents for the last 30 years; Peter, the youngest, in South Africa, Wendy, the only girl, in Pembrokeshire Wales, and myself, the oldest, in Pennsylvania. Wendy became the caregiver for our parents, George and Irene. It was geography mostly, but also the difficult relationship that two boys can have with an authoritative mother. Seven trips to the USA and four trips to Africa for extended visits convinced us both, that we could not muster the energy to deal with Irene, who was bending history, and George, who required little, but would side with Irene to avoid any fuss. A deal was made. Wendy would take the family home, a 400-year-old cottage in St. David's National Park, and be our parents' caregiver.

Many, many years of smooth sailing, gave way to dementia and that heartbreaking journey. Wendy would keep us informed, but our occasional visits did not contribute much to their long day to day journey. It is often the girl who steps up it seems. The phone call came that dad's journey had taken a turn for the worst. My mother had also fallen and was sporting a broken foot. She traveled around in an ancient wheelchair, the size of a Wegmans shopping cart. She insisted that my dad recognized and knew only her, but that was not true. He thought Wendy a man, my mother a bother, and me a stranger who was hanging around a bit too much!

I only had seven days; 14 visits to see my dad, all heartbreaking because he didn't know me. My mother and I visited him the day before I left for London to fly home...just us. I was pushing her Wegmans wheelchair up to St. Nan's Hospital, past the shop where Davis the Baker was pulling sausage rolls out of the oven. They smelled familiar... my dad's favorite! I parked Irene outside the shop and bought just one, wrapped in foil, a gift to my dad.

My mother said, "George...it's Paul...your son...he's going back to America tomorrow...say goodbye to him."

Nothing!

I said, "Dad...I got you a present...a sausage roll" and I opened the foil beneath his nose.

"Oh!... I'll have that... and how are those boys of yours?" he asked. Then he bit into that sausage roll, and he was gone. I was speechless.