

# Care Givers

By Erma Bombeck

Recently in my column I lamented the death of heroes. I was wrong. There isn't a scarcity of heroes. I was just looking for them in the wrong places. I thought they hung out in sports arenas, great halls, battlefields, or between the pages of adventure books.

I should have been looking for them in pharmacies, where they are waiting to have prescriptions filled; in hospital corridors, keeping vigil or collapsing wheelchairs and storing them in the trunks of cars. They are called **nurturers**—the well one in the family who takes care of the one with needs.

How many times have we passed by without seeing these nameless, faceless people who roll out of bed each day to serve? Most of them live in the shadow of those who are ill. They are not used to someone asking how they feel. If it should miraculously happen, they would probably feel guilty answering, "Fine."

Never underestimate what it takes to watch someone you have love in pain. Nurturers face each day without benefit of numbing painkillers or anesthetics. They live in a world where personal feelings and duty clash. Those who have assumed the mantle of responsibility for another human being hate the word hero. They are doing what they want to do, must do and wouldn't want anyone else to do.

I have observed women who pay the bills, have the oil changed in the car, change furnace filters, negotiate for a new roof, turn over CDs and go crazy trying to keep pace with Medicare and Medicaid forms when their husbands are unable to do so. I have seen men who bake pies, do the marketing, address Christmas card, keep track of birthdays, water plants, scrub floors and go crazy trying to keep pace with Medicare and Medicaid forms when their wives are unable to do so.

And daily I watch grown children who run errands, make a million phone calls, take parents to appointments, drop off food, make sure their license plates are current, their lawns are cut and their walks cleared of snow and go crazy trying to keep pace with Medicare and Medicaid forms.

Today would be a good time to think about them. And when you see a nurturer, ask, "How you doin'?"