

## Phil Gardner Monologue Script

Caregiver for Lois Gardner

Hi, Phil Gardner here. You asked me to tell you what it's like taking care of my wife. Lois, my wife, is in the hospital now with pneumonia. We just had our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary a few weeks ago. Then Lois got a cold about a week ago and it kept getting worse till I finally got scared by all her coughing and brought her to the emergency room. She doesn't smoke anymore but she used to and I think it took a toll on her lungs. She needs a few inhalers for her breathing problems.

Lois was healthy when we met. She owned and ran a restaurant where I used to eat sometimes after my divorce. We were around 50 years old. We had plans to do so many things. I worked hard for the fire department since I was 25 years old and I wanted to retire and see the world. So, we got married, Lois sold her restaurant and off we went! But our travels were cut short when Lois had a heart attack. It wasn't a bad one and she recovered OK I guess, but things were never quite the same. She developed emphysema, and then congestive heart failure. We did a little traveling, but she never got all her strength and energy back. I'd say she was pretty stable for at least 10 years, except for some problems with her breathing. She got a lot of colds and always kept her albuterol close by just in case. She still took care of herself though.

Then, about two years ago maybe, I noticed some concerning things. You know how you sometimes forget where you put things? Well Lois did that a LOT! I'd find keys and clothing and even food in the strangest places. Then last year her driving started to worry me. She'd get lost easy. She didn't want to drive at night. She went the wrong way down a one-way street and got a ticket for going through a stop sign. She'd just cry when I wanted to talk about it. Then she almost hit a guy on a motorcycle when I was in the car with her. I kind of yelled, not because I was mad, but out of fright. We just decided right then and there she'd quit getting behind the wheel. It's a big responsibility when you are the only driver in the house, so that was a big change.

I think things have been going downhill since then. Like with her meds. I realized she was just taking things out of random pill bottles whenever she thought of it. I got one of those pill organizers for her, but I know her meds and could see she wasn't doing it right, so I fill them up for her every week. I guess I've been gradually taking over other stuff too. I do almost all of the household chores. I don't mind, but I worry about her and where we're going from here. What if something happened to me? How would she manage? She needs a lot of help. Lois has a sister, Dorothy, but she lives about two hours away and has some health problems too. I have two kids from my first marriage. My son Phil Junior is married with three kids, and my daughter

Kara is married with two kids. It only takes about an hour to visit either of them. They've always been on good terms with Lois and me.

Now that she's in the hospital she seems a little worse, maybe because it's a strange environment. Now I guess I'll need to learn all about checking her breathing, her new meds, and the rest of her orders. I don't think she understands most of this. I'll do what I need to do to bring her home. I'm just worried about her and where we're going from here. I guess we'll just go home and follow orders and hope things work out. Maybe once she's feeling better and stronger we can get back to normal. Though I don't know what's normal anymore.