

You are here: [Home](#) / [One Month of Thankfulness](#) / A Month of Thankfulness: On Being There

# A Month of Thankfulness: On Being There

NOVEMBER 28, 2013 BY [ELLEN PILIGIAN](#) [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

[Like](#) Susan Makuch Brown and 32 others like this.

[Tweet](#) 3



***Ellen Piligian lost both of her parents last year, and yet she is grateful for the opportunity to be there for them when they needed her.***

I spent last Thanksgiving with my father in his hospital room, where I'd been with him day and night for nearly two weeks. My father had decided he no longer wanted to live. It was understandable.

We were both deep in grief over the loss of my mother just two months earlier. She, like him, had been in and out of the hospital over the previous few years, struggling with one serious health challenge after another. Her last hospitalization, which resulted in an emergency surgery she never recovered from, ended in an ICU, my hand holding hers as she lost her battle with a blood infection.

It was a horrible struggle for me to let my father go so soon after losing my mother. Yet I had to remind myself that he'd probably have let go sooner had it not been for her, his wife of more than 56 years.

After breaking his hip then discovering he had metastatic cancer, he'd grown to detest the dialysis he'd been on for five years. I reminded myself of the days I had to send my mother in to convince him to dialyze, to stay alive. "Do it for me," she'd say. "I want you to outlive me."

And so he did. And then he was done.

He told me he loved me dearly, that it wasn't that he wanted to die, but he didn't want to live "like this," on

## SEARCH

Search this website...

Search

## POPULAR RIGHT NOW

[The Great List of Things I Can't Do Because I Only Have Daughters](#)

[31 Reasons Why Men Don't Cheat](#)

[What Happens When Our Emotions Stay in Our Bodies](#)

[Mostly Straight, Most of the Time](#)

[The Manliest Thing About Me Is...](#)

[A Female Translation of "I Don't Want Sex"](#)

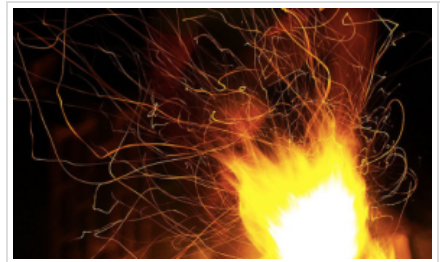
[What I Learned from 50 Naked People](#)

[A Surprising Reason Why it's So Hard to Forgive](#)

[The Lack of Gentle Platonic Touch in Men's Lives is a Killer](#)

[10 Responses to the Phrase "Man Up"](#)

## FEATURED CONTENT



### [100 Words on Love: Marry Me](#)

Your smile is every reason I have.



### [Thanks Dad, For Not Killing That Guy](#)

Alex Steed remembers the night his dad almost became a murderer.

### [How to Get Everything You Want from Casual Sex \(without Hurting](#)

dialysis, no longer strong and independent as he'd always been.

I didn't get to hold my father's hand as I held my mother's. He passed away early that Saturday morning after Thanksgiving as I slept a few feet away.

But I was there. And for that, I am grateful.

I was there. And I'd been there.

I was there for my parents for three years, as one health challenge after another befell them until one day I realized I was their caregiver. I was in charge of their doctors' appointments and home care, scheduling X-rays, chemo and physical therapy. I could recite their complicated medical histories without notes and go over their long lists of medications by brand name or generic. I even ran my father's dialysis for him, which he did at home. Beyond that, I was managing their bills, grocery shopping, and feeding the cats.

Many days I was overwhelmed — sometimes physically, sometimes emotionally — but never spiritually.

As often as my heart broke for my parents, and sometimes for myself, I was also, and increasingly so, grateful for so many things. I feel that still. Maybe more so.

Thank God I could be there for them. Thank God I had my health and abundant energy. Thank God I had a good mind to understand their medical issues so well I was often assumed to be a medical professional. I was a good advocate.

More, I was a good daughter. I was told that often. Maybe too often.

I learned I was rare. We live in times when it's difficult for children to care for their aging parents, to allow their parents to stay in their own homes, cared for and surrounded by those they love.

Not everyone can afford to cut back on a career or even put one on hold to care for their parents, or to move in with them, or to uproot their own family from the other side of the country. Not everyone is emotionally equipped to handle caregiving.

But for whatever reason, I could do that for them. And I know how much they appreciated me. I'm so grateful for that.

As I shared at my father's memorial, I gave my parents a gift of myself those years, but it was also a gift to myself.

Photo: Flickr/[Maiara Bolsson](#)

Like [Susan Makuch Brown](#) and 32 others like this.



FILED UNDER: [ONE MONTH OF THANKFULNESS](#) TAGGED WITH: [CARING FOR PARENTS](#), [ELDERLY PARENTS](#), [ELLEN PILIGIAN](#), [GRATITUDE](#), [GRIEF](#), [LOSS OF A PARENT](#), [ONE MONTH OF THANKFULNESS](#), [THANKSGIVING](#)



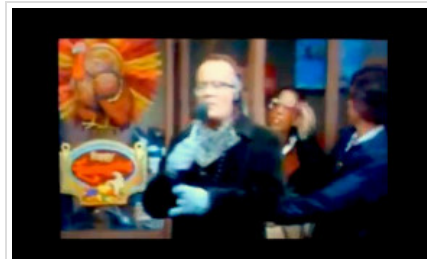
#### About Ellen Piligian

Ellen Piligian is a freelance journalist in Detroit. Since earning her master's degree in journalism from Columbia University, she's covered movie stars and regular folks for People magazine, a pistol-packing preacher for Reader's Digest, advertising for the New York Times and a mother with ALS for the Detroit Free Press. Among her proudest moments: giving her mother a kidney in 2003 and being a caregiver for her parents. She writes with both humor and heart on her blog and is working on a memoir. Find her on Twitter at [@ellen313](#).



### People)

Robin Juliet explains how to have a healthy and honest NSA relationship without guilt or heartbreak



### The Greatest Thanksgiving Video of All Time

There have been some hit and miss holiday promotions over the years, but this one takes the cake (pie?).



### Thanksgiving: At the Intersection of Grace and Sorrow

Michael C. Phillip writes about the spirit of unity that shapes the history of Thanksgiving.



### 10 Gifts for the Guy Who Has Almost Everything

JJ Vincent personally stayed up half the night looking for gifts for impossible men. You're welcome.

### Justin Timberlake: Responsible Employer

JT negotiates union contract for his backup dancers.