

# Whose Memories?

Category: Dementia

written by Erikka J. Allhusen | March 19, 2025

"Here are some things Dad brought back from moving Grandma," my mother said, as she placed a box on my dining table. It was filled with objects from my grandmother's apartment. My father and aunt had just spent a week relocating their mother to a memory care facility and, having little time and many items to sort, had culled out a few things that they thought might be meaningful to me.

I looked through the box. It contained primarily framed photos, most of which were of my growing family in recent years: pictures and holiday cards I'd sent to keep her connected from a distance. *Why did he give these back to me, I wondered. What am I supposed to do with them?* They were intended for her; they could serve the same purpose even if she was now in memory care.

A few days later, I asked my mother the intention behind the returns. "I think he thought there wasn't room," she replied. "Her new place is small."

"Why not tape them to the wall? That way she at least has pictures to decorate it."

"She doesn't recognize many people anymore."

"And removing pictures of her family will help with that?" I felt the distance between my grandmother and myself grow wider.

"You could pick some to have him take back to her, if you want."

*I chose all of these for her to have in the first place, I thought.*

"Should I send her a holiday card this year, then?"

"Up to you."

*Is it more for me than for her? I pondered. What must it be like, receiving cards and photos from people you cannot recall? Does it feel like love, to be remembered? Or is it a reminder of the distance in space and time?*

Maybe it is kinder to allow her to live in the present.

Maybe I have not accepted that I am already in her past.

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