

# Measured in Days

Category: House Calls and Home Care

written by Andres F. Diaz | December 11, 2025

When I left home for medical training, I knew distance would be hard, but I didn't understand how distance could change time itself. As a medical student, my schedule is packed tight, and traveling home has become a kind of emotional arithmetic: three visits a year, maybe four if I'm lucky, each only a handful of days. Somewhere along the way, my time with my mother stopped being measured in years and became measured in holidays, long weekends and whatever small windows my training allows.

Each time I go home now, I notice something new. A softer line in her face, a slower way she rises from her chair, a lighter palette to her hair, and the weight of tiredness she tries not to show. It's all very gentle, very graceful, but unmistakably there. And layered onto this is my grandmother's Alzheimer's, which seems to move in the opposite direction of grace, stripping away her sense of place, time and self. My mother is her primary caregiver, her days structured around the unpredictable rhythms of a mind letting go.

What has struck me most is the parallel between their changes. My grandmother's decline is obvious, but my mother's aging feels accelerated by my absence, visible in snapshots rather than in slow progression. I sometimes feel like I'm watching two clocks run at different speeds, both moving in directions I can't influence. And yet, in those small spaces of caregiving—helping my grandmother eat, repeating an answer for the third time, guiding her gently back to the present—I see something deeper in my mother. A tenderness. A steadiness. A devotion that feels almost sacred.

I'm not a religious person, but watching my mother care for her mother has made me rethink what reverence really means. Caregiving may be exhausting, unfair and at times heartbreaking, but it is also a kind of moral practice. A way of honoring the people who brought us here. If prayer is anything like bearing witness to the aging of the people you love and choosing to stay present anyway, then perhaps this is the closest I've ever come to faith.

Each time I leave home, I understand a little more clearly, yet urgently, that the time I have with my mother is fleeting, and that caring for our parents, in whatever way we can, might be the most human work we ever do.

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