

Video Review

Not My Home

Produced and directed by Suzanne Babin,
Tynette Deveau, and Bert Deveau
Toronto: Deveau-Babin Productions, 1994. 46 min.

Reviewed by Rhonda Seidman-Carlson

This video, recorded at a long-term-care facility (LTCF) in eastern Canada, chronicles the lives of various residents, their families, and the staff of the LTCF. The impact of entering and living in an institution is demonstrated in a poignant and realistic fashion.

The residents talk about the dichotomy of their lives: living in a *home* but having no home; being alive but having no life; and receiving everything tangible the staff can provide (physical care, security) but losing themselves as people.

These residents never accept their situation; rather, they become resigned to it. This parallels the experience of the staff. The team members interviewed describe settling for doing the best they can, given their limited time and resources. However, like the residents, they mourn the lack of connectedness, the lack of sharing personhood with others in their daily lives at the nursing home.

The most striking element of *Not My Home* is the lack of normal, everyday conversation in the institution. The silence of daily life is interrupted only occasionally, by the ringing of the fire alarm for drills, the voices on the overhead announcements, and the rolling of the wheels as the trolleys move down the corridors. There is talking *to*, talking *over*, but no talking *with* the residents. The comments of one resident best capture the essence of this video: "It is the small things that make a life."

Finding out what makes life meaningful to another is at the core of nursing. Nurses in all sectors — hospital, community, and long-term care — would benefit from viewing *Not My Home* and discussing: (a) how decisions are reached in recommending LTCF placement; (b) whether issues and concerns that might be alleviated by the move are replaced with other risks, such as loss of personhood; and (c) whether nurses can make life for nursing-home residents more natural, made up of more of those "small things."

Nurses may also wish to review the video with new LTCF residents or with families considering placement for a loved one. The words of those who have gone through the experience can assist the nurse in helping the individual and family to discuss their fears and hopes around LTCF placement.

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