

The Truth of Alzheimers **by Krissie Babcock**

(My daughter was fortunate to have a very creative and artistic grandmother when she was a little girl, up until her early teenage years. Sadly, that grandmother was taken by Alzheimers during the last years of her life. This is what Krissie wrote and was read at her grandmother's funeral).

A mother and child walk hand in hand to the mailbox. The letter inside the box is addressed to the child. Even though the child is not old enough to read, she sees the beautiful drawing of the towering bird house and the birds flying gracefully around it – and understands. Her mother reads the letter, it says simply,

The Martins are back.
Love,
Grandmother

As years pass, the child learns to read. She retrieves the expected letter without the help of her mother. The letter becomes longer and more detailed. Enclosed, as always, is a beautiful drawing of the birds which return to her Grandmother's house each Spring.

When the sixth letter arrives, it is marked by sadness. The Grandmother writes, "Since your Grandfather went away, I feel such a deep sadness. I hoped he would return with the Martins, but the Martins came home without him." Enclosed was yet another beautiful drawing.

The child took the drawing and drew a picture of her Grandfather on it. She signed it in simple child-like handwriting, "Grandmother, I love you," and sent it to her Grandmother. Once again, love returned to the Grandmother when the birds came home.

Years passed and each year letters and drawings were exchanged, until slowly, illness took the Grandmother's mind. The family cared for the Grandmother until her care was beyond their capabilities. The Grandmother now lives in a nursing home and does not recognize her family. The child visits her Grandmother and occasionally when they are alone, she takes the Grandmother's hand and asks softly, "Grandmother, when will the Martins come home?"