

Jane Paradise

P. O. Box 632 Provincetown MA 02657-0632

+1 415 321 0382 jane@janeParadise.com www.janeParadise

Ada at 100: Why am I still here?

My mother-in-law is Ada. She is 100 years old and still living in the 3-decker house in Roxbury that her parents bought right after she was born in 1913. My brother-in-law and his seven cats live with her. He is her primary care giver. My husband and I, based in San Francisco half the year, visit when we can. My husband brings companionship and support to my brother-in-law. I bringmy camera. And questions, distractions and liveliness to a quiet household. In earlier years, before nightmares and some dementia set in, real conversation was possible.

When you walk into her second floor apartment, she is always seated on a kitchen chair by the window. The first thing she always says is "Why am I here?" "Everyone's dead." She bemoans that fact that her friends and contemporaries are all dead. She professes no interest in anything - not TV, not family, not the news- yet she carries on - strong in voice and spirit. I never would have imagined such a strong voice at 100. She is very clear about wanting coffee, wanting to eat, wanting to use the bathroom, and most of all wanting to know exactly where my bother-in-law is at all times. And lately, she speaks confusingly and clearly of her father and her mother and her lost relatives.

Her mother lived, at home, in this 3 decker, until 106 years old. Ada was 101 in April. The longevity continues.

(Ada passed away at 101 years old on September 3, 2014.)