Personal Reflection on Aging

When I first found out that we had to take a whole class focusing on older adults, I have to say that I was excited. I am lucky enough to have all of my grandparents, as well as most of my great-grandparents, so I enjoy learning about and being around older adults. My family is very close and all of my grandparents and great-grandparents live roughly as close as five minutes to an hour away. I consider myself fortunate to have the opportunity to get to know nearly all of them as well as I do. My mothers’ parents, Sandra and George, are the closest to me. They live about ten minutes away and have been a major part of my life since I was born. My mother and I lived with them for a year or two while my father was in the military. When we moved out I would always go spend weekends at their house, while staying up late watching television and talking to my grandmother. I still go stay weekends when I get the chance. My grandmother was at every ball game and major event in my life, and she is someone I consider to be my best friend. The oldest person in my family is my great-grandmother, Ollie, and she is 93. She still cooks meals when we come over and continues to walk around like it is nothing. When you see her, you would never be able to guess that she is 93, and she loves that. She loves it when we are out in public and someone thinks she’s 70.

Before I had to write this paper I never thought to ask my grandfather, George, about his parents. They lived in Minnesota and died when I was young, so I didn’t see them much. I was shocked to find out that his mother as well as
sister had Alzheimer’s disease. Before finding this out, I thought that no one in my family had this disease. Because of this, I have never had any personal experiences with Alzheimer’s or dementia. Though I have not had any experience, I know I will be comfortable and have no problem working with and establishing relationships with the elderly adults with Alzheimer’s and/or dementia at Mountain Trace.

As for my thoughts on my own aging, I am both excited and worried. I am extremely excited to see what life holds for me, and the wonderful memories I will make along the way. Hopefully I will have an incredible family, full of love to surround me as I age, as well as a wonderful husband by my side. My worries are only about my health because I know my family has a history of aging and learning about our history of Alzheimer’s frightens me. I know the disease is not always genetic, but just the fact that two people from the same side had it makes me wonder.

I believe it is important for recreational therapists to understand the aging process so that we know what we are working with and whether or not it comes normally with the aging process or not. The reality that there is an influx of elderly adults in nursing homes shows that we are going to be needed more. Working to make the last years of these older adults life happy, healthy and meaningful is so important; and we can help them in a variety of ways.

The three most important things I would like to learn in order to be an effective professional in geriatric health services would be interventions that work for the clients, how to handle different situations and properly care for the
patients, and how to communicate with clients with Alzheimer’s since sometimes they are unable to communicate their needs. Communication is a huge part of what we do whether it is verbal or not. I cannot wait to learn about this population and how to assist them. I do think that in future I would be willing to work with this population, and I know after this class I will be sure of it.