

This was my response to the reporter.

October 8, 1997

Dear Yolanda,

Please accept my sincere appreciation for the wonderful article on the problems existing in home health care. I showed it to a friend who is a professor of English at UTA. She agreed that it was an excellent article, pointing out that you began and ended with me, and that you did a lot of research. I plan to make copies of your article and send it to friends and to those who need to be better informed. I knew that my letter to the editor touched only the tip of the iceberg, as was clearly pointed out by the phone calls you received from readers, but I knew it was more likely to be printed if it were brief.

I am extremely grateful that person described in the article is not me, though I know it is the typical situation for many who are elderly and/or disabled. Occasionally there are human interest stories in the news media depicting their plight. I hope, therefore, that you don't mind me telling you something about myself. I live in a modest, three bedroom mobile home with the extra space used for books, art supplies, and storage. I feed myself even though it is slow and difficult, and I have plenty to eat. I get in and out of the bathtub every night and the first thing I do in the morning is dress myself. It is constant struggle, but I am determined to be independent as long as possible.

In spite of my speech problem I have been invited to speak to various groups, have been featured on both a local and a national TV show, and strangers often tell me they liked the questions I asked when I am in a group. Others tell me they were surprised that I am so articulate. With approximately a hundred people present a priest said, after I asked one question, that he would remember me and would talk about me everywhere he goes. I wrote for the Arlington Daily News for nine years and have written for a few other newspapers and magazines. After writing for many years I grew tired of publishers and began writing, illustrating, and doing the layout for my own books. Friends do the binding. I am also working on revising the fifty page sample of my autobiography, which the professor of journalism has told me is well written and has excellent film possibilities. My art work, including computer art, has been exhibited in local, regional, and national shows, and the judges have no way of knowing that I am a person with a disability. It was through my writing for the Texas Catholic that Joseph Delaney, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth, became acquainted with my ability

and asked me to be the diocesan representative to the National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities. Therefore I keep him informed about my work with home health care. In '95 at the dinner and board meeting of the United Cerebral Palsy I received the Alain Bedford Award achievement award, the first one ever presented, along with a beautiful introduction. I also have many wonderful friends, and they have been a rich blessing.

I doubt that strangers expect me to be so active. As I said earlier, I have many things for which to be grateful. Perhaps this is what makes me concerned about the plight of those who are less fortunate. I see it as a tragedy and a scandal that the home health care system has been allowed to abuse those who are in vulnerable situations. The root of my complaints has been consistently ignored for years, and apparently there is an unwillingness to change because of the greed in the system.

Thank you again for the excellent article.

Cordially yours,  
Jean Riley