

Our widowed mother, Gladys Hannah Wright, started dialysis in August 2010. She lives in Macon County outside of Franklin but has to make a 52.6 mile roundtrip to the Sylva Dialysis Center in Jackson County three days a week— Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. The center also has more patients on a Monday, Wednesday, Friday schedule. Our mother has to be there by 7:30 am which means she has to go to bed early the night before to get up at 5:45 am to check her blood sugar; have her insulin shot; take her other medicines; eat breakfast; get dressed; pack a bag with blankets, pillows, and snacks; numb her arm and wrap it in plastic so she will be ready to leave at 6:45 am for the drive across Cowee Mountain. Once she is at the center she has to weigh in, have her temperature taken, her breathing checked, any swelling checked, her blood pressure taken, and then be hooked up to a machine and checked every 30 minutes. It takes her between 4 and 4 ½ hours each time on the dialysis machine depending on her blood pressure and if the bleeding has stopped. One of us either stays in Sylva or arrives around 11:30 am to be there when she gets off the machine. Many times she has gotten sick on the trip home after she has been on dialysis for so long. An alternative to being on the machine for 4 ½ hours is to go every day for a shorter time, which would be even more difficult to schedule. Our mother is 84 years old so this has been very hard on her and our entire family. She has other medical conditions such as being a diabetic and walking with a cane due to a hip replacement. Not only is the trip hard on her, she also gets very cold in the dialysis center so she has to have extra blankets to try and keep herself warm. We make a schedule and rotate days taking her and picking her up. We consider ourselves lucky to have many family members who can take off from work or school and work around our schedules to make her comfortable on the long trip to and from Sylva. Some patients have only one person to take them and wait for them or have to rely on public transportation or even drive themselves. The trips have caused a financial strain on our family due to gas prices and family members missing work.

During the summer months, many Florida residents with summer homes around Franklin also use the dialysis center in Sylva, which may cause the year round patients to change their days and times because more people need dialysis. Our mother was recently asked if she could be at the center by 5:00 am on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday which she couldn't do because that would mean leaving her home by 4:15 am for the trip. During the winter months we have to arrange so that someone with a four wheel drive vehicle takes her and picks her up. Driving across that mountain in the winter was very terrifying for her and for us, risking her life and ours to get her there. She missed one day of dialysis last winter due to the ice and snow. Two attached pictures show what Cowee Mountain was like last winter when even four wheel drive vehicles were sliding off the road. The third photo shows our mother and sister waiting in the dark morning hours for an ambulance and wrecker to clear an accident that had just happened on the road ahead of them. They had to call the center to let them know she would be late but to save her spot. If she misses a treatment, she will have medical problems such as high potassium and fluid levels. This is life support for her—it is not a choice. Macon County dialysis patients need and deserve to have a nearby dialysis center in Franklin.

Gladys Hannah Wright

*Gladys Hannah Wright*

Her children:

Gloria Wright Thun *Gloria Wright Thun*

Sue Ellen Wright Chastain *Sue Ellen Wright Chastain*

Walter Wright *Walter C. Wright*

Donna Wright Hefner *Donna Wright Hefner*

Brenda Wright Perteet *Brenda Wright Perteet*



