

# Scooterville

By

Janet A. Nicolet

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Dedication**

**I** owe a great deal of gratitude to my four children and ten grandchildren, as they have been my greatest supporters with their love and encouragement during this chapter of my life.

## **New Kid on the Block**

**F**or the past five years I've been the Activity Director at Gulf Towers Apartment Complex. I took the position believing I would only last a few months to a year, as it was not the kind of job I had anticipated having until retirement.

My perception of the elderly before becoming a Towers employee was that of a grouchy old man or woman sitting in a rocking chair all day long. They would rock back and forth, back and forth, all the while complaining about how the rainy weather caused the arthritis in their knees and hands to accelerate the pain. And, oh yes, their gout in their feet kept them from being civil to anyone. The elder's negativity seemed to be like a security blanket enfolding them. I must admit, though, I'm not the easiest person to get along with – just ask my husband or my kids. But, I have high hopes that I won't be like those whom I perceived to be the norm amongst the seniors of our world.

The job for an Activity Director had been advertised in the local newspaper which read: *Energetic person to provide fun and games for residents of a beach front apartment complex.* I could envision myself partying right along with the best of them. So I applied. I pulled out my resume that had sat dormant in my file cabinet for probably ten to fifteen years and beefed it up to overwhelm the Human Resource Officer, assuming (and also hoping) that he or she wouldn't check out my references. When I finished I mailed it to the address listed in the newspaper ad.

I'd raised five children and a husband, and was now looking for a job that would bring me pleasure for the next few years. Our oldest son had finished college and was now working at a bank. We still had two girls in college and another girl and a son in high school. They didn't need Mama at home as much as they did when they were little.

Surprise! Surprise! Yes, to my surprise my resume got results and I got called in for an interview. The session went pretty good, with me improvising answering to any questions that the matronly lady asked of me. She began with, "Have you had any experience as an Activity Director?"

I quickly responded with, "Oh, yes. I've planned parties and activities for large groups of people for a number of years."

"My, my, that's commendable. Did you ever want to give it up?"

I tipped my head slightly and with a pacifying tone in my voice, I answered, "Oh, yes. But I never did. I felt so close to all of them. The people seemed to be drawn to me for some reason." *Hope she doesn't ask any more questions or I'll have to divulge that those were the years I had spent raising my five children and husband along with entertaining my in-laws.*

"Well, let me tell you what this job entails," said the woman as she adjusted herself in her big, black leather, high-back manager-style chair. She leaned forward, her elbows now rested on her desk, the fingers of her hands interlaced – in a getting-down-to-business pose.

I took out from my purse a pad of paper and a pen which I held in my hand poised to write down what she

said. I wanted her to think I was really interested in what she was saying.

As she looked over the top of her glasses that were half-way down her nose, she began. “We’ve never had an Activity Director before, so it will be your responsibility to drum up interest in whatever events you come up with. Remember, though, these are senior citizens, most of who are in their late seventies, all the way up to their early nineties.”

I blinked. I gulped. My jaw dropped from shock, but I quickly recovered and closed my mouth. I had no idea that this was a senior citizen apartment complex. At that very moment, I wanted to bolt out of there, but an image of my elderly, controlling mother wagging her finger in my face made me sit right there and listen. ‘Be polite,’ she always said.

The woman went on, “Many of our residents have medical issues that would keep them from engaging in strenuous activities, so you’ll have to keep that in mind.”

I nodded my head and continued to write. Actually, I doodled as she spoke, tipping the pad of paper up just enough so that she couldn’t see what I was doing.

“Do you have any questions, so far?” she asked.

“Yes. I’m interested in knowing what you expect from me.”

“The hours would be from eight in the morning until five at night, with an hour off for lunch. Of course, you would be able to take two fifteen-minute breaks during the day,” her tone suddenly changed to one of disdain, “the government insists on that, you know.” She looked back down at my resume and then raised her eyes to meet mine.

“I must say that you seem more qualified for the position than the others I’ve interviewed, so if you are interested, I would be more than happy to hire you.”

I sat straight up in the chair and smiled back at the lady. “I, ah, oh, ah, yes, I’d be happy to take the job. When would I start?” I gulped, thinking what a silly fool I was. I didn’t like old people. They burped, passed gas, and wagged their finger in your face when they didn’t like what you said. But, here I was accepting the job I really didn’t want.

The lady continued, “This is Thursday, so let’s say Monday morning. Be here in my office at eight o’clock sharp!”

I politely thanked her for the *wonderful opportunity* she had given me and turned to leave. I closed her door behind me and stood there for a moment. *Oh, you silly fool. What have you gotten yourself into?”*

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