



They called her “Nana”

To the nurses, residents, and visitors at St. Barnabas, she was Nana. She was tiny – a little under five feet, but her presence loomed large.

Her sweet smile lit up the place and her Southern Belle voice had a musical quality when greeting everyone as she wheeled up and down the halls.

To me, she was Mama and my best friend. When she lapsed into the deeper levels of Alzheimer’s, I wanted her to receive the same quality care she was receiving at home. Mama was so special that only the best would be good enough for her.

St. Barnabas gave Mary Carnes their best. The staff welcomed her with open arms and surrounded her daily with love, respect, and care.

They treated Mama with dignity and admiration as they acknowledged that she was a respected educator, one of the first special education teachers in South Carolina, and the wife of a prominent physician.

The nurses listened intently as Mama told them stories about beginning her career as the sole teacher in a one-room schoolhouse and about accompanying her husband on house calls out in the country to help deliver a baby in the middle of the night.

This unique facility with a heart became her second family.

The staff’s hugs, smiles, and gentleness showed they cared about their Nana. One morning while Mama and I were out in the garden of St. Barnabas having a mother-daughter talk, she beckoned me closer, smiled proudly, and said,

“You know, I’ve never had so many friends!”