

THE POWER OF STORY-WRITING THE BEST LAST CHAPTER

MY NAME IS PAT. THIS IS THE STORY OF THE LAST CHAPTER OF THE LIFE OF MY FATHER

Ken

Ken was born on December 12, 1933. He was a tremendous athlete growing up, but his love was hockey. He came to the East Kootenays in 1955 to play for the Trail Smoke Eaters. He moved to Kimberley the following season to play for the Dynamiters where he won several league and provincial hockey awards. After hockey, my dad stayed very active participating in golf, curling, cross country skiing and walking. He will also be forever remembered as the sales representative for Labatts aka Kokanee during the 70s and 80s.



On one visit the doctor wanted to meet with me to discuss my father. The floor was busy and the only place that was quiet was the ward TV room. There I was advised that my father was dying and that antibiotics were keeping him alive. The doctor wondered whether we should just keep him comfortable.

Disturbing discussion in a public venue. First time told Dad was dying. Possible explanation: "Your dad has had many illnesses and as we get older they take their toll, so he is dying from all those things."

Listen – **KNOW WHO THE PATIENT IS** – learn about their life, hopes, fears. Who are they, where have they been, what are they most proud of. What would you like your caregivers to know about you?

Later in life, Ken faced several health challenges including bouts with esophageal and bladder cancer and developed poor heart health which led to having a pacemaker installed in 2016.

The beginning of the end began in the summer of 2017 when we noticed a definite loss of mobility and balance which eventually led to several falls in his home and while out walking. His partner, whose health was deteriorating from trying to take care of him, was forced to call an ambulance after a fall from which she could not help him up. He was taken to hospital.

It was suggested that I take him to my home which is not set up for anything like that. So I arranged for him to move into a semi-assisted care facility. After one night there, he collapsed again and was taken back to the hospital by ambulance.

Beginning palliative care would have been helpful at this stage, allowing the family to prepare and identify their wishes. Introduce the palliative process in the latter part of the curative stage. **ASK QUESTIONS – Who would you like to make decisions on your behalf if you can't?**

After lengthy telephone conversations with my brother, we decided not to accept the doctor's recommendation and to carry on with treatment.

The conversations turned to what to do with my father. It was apparent the hospital wanted to discharge him as they felt that there was nothing more they could do for him. He could not go back to the semi-assisted care facility so I was again asked to move him to my home. If he was truly dying, my home and myself were even less prepared to take him than before. I was assured that home support would be provided but I felt that I was being given no options. I again refused.

Finally, I was told that a respite bed had become available. On April 12, 2018 Dad took his last road trip in an ambulance to the care facility where he passed away on October 26, 2018.

Information on community paramedic program; planning for long term care. **WHO CAN HELP** – who needs to be included on the collaborative – integrated team?

Over the next week or so Dad was moved almost daily between the emergency room, day surgery room and the 2nd floor. I would visit my father every day but had no answers as to what was actually wrong with him. He continued to deteriorate and now his speech was becoming confused and unintelligible at times.

Information on services available in community. What services would be most useful at this stage? How can the family be supported to make the right choices for their loved one and for them?

Every person's story matters. Loved ones need to be listened to and wishes need to be respected.

Thank you for allowing me to tell Ken's story, and although I feel the system failed us in some ways, I want to acknowledge the tremendous care that was given to my father during his final journey. *It will not be forgotten.*

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