

## Dignity

Early on a Monday morning I received a call at my home from a friend who learned on Friday that her father was dying. She told me that her family placed their father in the Veteran's nursing home after he became dependent on the sitters in the home taking care of her mother who has Alzheimer's.

She shared how difficult this time had been for the family especially since her father had not wanted to go to the nursing home. She expressed how important it was for her father to come home to die. He wanted to die in the home he had built and to be beside his ailing wife.

She felt the only way they could make things right was to get him home today so he could be with his wife and family. I assured her I would do everything possible to make that happen.

As I finished getting ready to go the office, I remember thinking I could not believe this active man was near death. It seemed only a couple of weeks ago I had seen him walking along the road from his daughter's place of business swinging his golf club.

I knew we had a lot to accomplish if we were going to get her father home today and for a brief moment, I wondered if this was possible. I immediately started making phone calls and within a couple of hours, we were on our way to the nursing home for a pre-evaluation.

It was clear, if we were going to give this patient and family their wish of dying in the home he built for his wife of 50 years, we would have to move quickly. Kay Burkett, PCC left with the daughter to visit the home to prepare for any equipment needs and I phoned the physician to see if we could obtain an order.

Within an hour, I learned the physician had given the verbal order. Kay and the daughter returned to the nursing home to pick up her father. We all arrived at the home and assisted in getting the patient to his hospital bed that had just been delivered.

During the hours to follow, we would be met with skepticism about what we could and would do for this family and their loved one. It was clear that everyone loved this man but not all would understand what hospice could do. Some even challenged the notion of hospice. Education became the number one plan of action. Kay would spend hours talking and re-assuring this family.

My friend's father died three days later in the home he built, in the bed next to his ailing wife, surrounded by his four children and extended family with the support of Kay Burkett and Chaplain Bailey.

I believe we have many stories to tell but when I received the following letter from our patient's son last week, I knew what story I needed to write.

It reads:

*Johnnie, I would like to take some time to try to express our deep appreciation to you and Kay for the wonderful job you did with my father at his time of need. He was a very private person not wanting to have help with anything. The care that all of you provided for him was great.*

*My dad was a man who walked 10 miles a day up to 6 months before he got sick. He played golf and did many other things. He did not know how to handle the terrible things that were happening to him. Dad did not know too much at the end except that we were all there and at HOME with him. I know that is what he wanted.*

*The time factor was pushed up to get him home and you came through like a real champion. My brother, sisters and I thank you and Kay with all our hearts.*

*About a month ago we had to call again for our mother and you have been taking care of her now also.*

*We do not know what we would have done without you and your staff through the ordeal of knowing what to do and all the mediations that you helped us with when we needed it.*

*Johnnie, I can tell you one thing for sure that the pastor you have on your staff is one of the best I have ever seen. He was here when we needed him and prayed for my dad and held our hand when we needed it. When the end was coming, Kay called him. He was 1 ½ hours away but he came to us as fast as anyone I know could. He stayed with us until dad had passed onto glory. What a wonderful person he is.*

*Thank you so much,  
Harry B. Stanfield, Jr. and family*



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