

Transcription

Media File Name: Maria Poppe EDIT.mp3

Media File ID: 2985304

Media Duration: 5:30

Order Number: 2003290

Date Ordered: 2021-03-26



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In my particular situation with my dear friend, Joanne, who was my early childhood friend, we started out together in kindergarten, went to high school together, walked every day to our bus stop, and took the bus to our school. But we never, after graduation, lost our contact with each other, even though our lives took different paths. As we got older and retirement came in, it was a beautiful opportunity to get together and see each other often. And we've made it a priority, not only myself and Joanne, but two other friends from our neighborhood that felt it was important to stay connected.

Joanne died on December the 14th. And I remember getting the phone call from Pat who told me that Joanne had passed away. And no one really is sure exactly what happened because she wasn't heard from or seen for two days. And finally, a neighbor who used a system, they were both living alone, to make sure they were okay, would raise and lower their blinds. And so raised meant I'm here, I'm okay. And blind means I'm asleep. But Joanne's blinds were open for two days, so her friend thought she was okay. But she never picked up their phone when she was called. She didn't answer her door when it was knocked. So she got in touch with Pat who had a key. And Pat went to her house to find the storm door to the front door was locked, so they had to call the police.

And when the police entered the house, Joanne, they figured she had passed away about five or six hours before and had been sitting on her sofa with the blanket over her legs, and just was gone. What Pat told me, Pat was very angry because Joanne had said something that she wasn't feeling well. But no one knows if she tried to call a doctor, because of COVID could not get an appointment, and she was too sick to get herself to the emergency room, no one knows that. So you have first that anger that this has happened during this time of COVID. She may not have died of COVID, but it was COVID that may have caused her to die.

We both mourned. And Pat was angry at Joanne because she felt she didn't do enough for herself, that her death was senseless. She could have reached out. She felt she was a proud person and didn't want to bother anyone. I didn't feel like that at all. I just felt loss. I just felt grief. I just felt we were robbed because of COVID and this pandemic to say goodbye. We didn't have the tools that we do in our culture of mourning. You know, we didn't have those three days of wakes, and coming together, and sharing your loss. I felt robbed of that. And I couldn't hug or cry on the shoulders of the people I needed to. And to know that she died alone, nobody is saying goodbye to her, nobody had talked to her in two days, it's painful knowing that.

And to know someone and so many of our 500,000 people we lost, died many of them, if not most of them, alone in a hospital with tubes hooked around

them. I'm a retired nurse, so I have seen death. And I had the opportunity to be with many who died alone, but I was there holding their hand and talking to them. So I know those nurses were with those people who didn't have family at their bedside, and that's a comfort. Yet, for those who are left behind, it's gonna take a long time to get through their grieving knowing that they weren't there to hold their hand, to kiss their forehead, to say goodbye. It's hard. It's very hard.

I'm 78 years old, so you think of your own mortality. I want to live through this pandemic so I won't die like those people had to die. I wanna live through this so when my time comes, I'm blessed as my husband was blessed to have my friends and family around me.