

## Mom's Story

### The story of Lena Storey and her Advance Care Plan

My mother, Lena Storey, died on January 29, 2017 at the age of 95.

This story begins on Mom's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. We had been talking about Advance Care Planning for several years, and over that time she would often offer up an insight or a consideration. On her birthday, we settled down to make her plan. It was a simple, straight forward plan which addressed her values, beliefs and wishes.

My sister and I assured her that we would do all we could to have her wishes respected.

I set out to get her plan into the hands of everyone I could think of that might have a role in her care: my sister, Mom's doctor, and the reception office at Mom's assisted living residence, who assured me that no one left by ambulance without the attendees receiving a copy of the plan if there was one. A copy also went in her purse and I put a large notice on her fridge about where to find the plan.

On the next four birthdays, we took a little time to review her plan to ensure that what she had written was still what she wanted. At her 95<sup>th</sup> birthday review she declared, "Who would know that dying was so much work?"

A week after that birthday, she went to emergency with a suspected case of pneumonia. This was her first hospital stay

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since giving birth to me seventy-one years before. She was only in a few days, but it provided me the opportunity to offer her plan to a staff member who seemed very pleased that Mom had done a plan and that I was offering her a copy.

On January 26, Mom walked to the library, about four blocks from her home and then stopped to get her hair done on the way back. That evening she phoned to say she felt quite tired and didn't think she would take part in the next day's activities at the assisted living residence.

In the early evening of the 27<sup>th</sup>, I received a phone call from the hospital. The emergency doctor introduced himself, said that Mom was with him although unresponsive and not able to speak for herself. He said he had her plan and understood what she was asking of him. He asked if I had a smart phone, I said "no". He said that if I did, he would show me what he needed to do, but because I didn't, he would call me in 20 minutes. When that call came, he said he had removed the breathing tube that the Ambulance crew had put in and Mom did not react to the removal. He said she was breathing on her own. As I live two and a half hours away and the night was cold and snowy, he suggested that I should come in the morning.

My sister and I companied Mom on the 28<sup>th</sup> during the day and all that night. She died before noon on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Mom died exactly as she had wished.

Although I still miss my mother and think of her often, I have embraced the comfort that I receive from knowing that the work she and I did in planning for her end days was such a worthwhile effort not only for her but, long-term, for me.

Sincerely,

Gayle, 100 Mile House, BC