

At 89 years old I have, over the years, personally experienced waiting for dearly loved ones to die.

First, my Grandma who was living independently, doing her spring gardening and managing to send me a bunch of snowdrops. In May of that year, 1957, at the age of 83 she collapsed into a deep coma. There was no-one home as the saying goes. My Mum and Auntie nursed her and kept her clean and moved her dead weight for 3 weeks. In her own bed. In her home.

No washing machines or dryers or adult diapers in those days. Can you imagine the appalling amount of washing, and drying and turning her and bathing her?

No M.A.I.D. or advance consent in those days. No Life support machines. I arrived from my distant home too late to do more than weep and make cups of tea for Mum and Auntie.

Then my Mum died in December 1994.

But in May 1994 I was visiting her in England. She was 87 but still living independently. With my niece and grandson (age 10) we had a lovely vacation which included travelling on little tourist trains all over north Wales and going down a slate mine! What fun we had.

I returned to Canada and on arrival received a message that Mum had collapsed and gone into a deep coma. I returned and found she was not on any life support but again, there was no one home. She was lying like that for SIX MONTHS in a special ward. My sister and I took turns being with her each month.

One time I arrived to find that she had been given antibiotics because she had pneumonia; when I was a youngster, commonly known as the old man's friend. I had to have a long discussion with the staff about that but even so she continued to just lie there until the next bout months later.

Mum did not suffer but it was a terrible strain on our family.

We then I come to my daughter who died in 1999 age 34. I still cannot easily go into the details of her terrible last months. No resuscitation order but no MAID either.

So I discussed my own wishes with close friends about 5 years ago and have filled out forms, and received the support of my doctor on various other forms and had hoped that the present legislation would help me....but it didn't. And I am not sure the proposed Bill C5 will help either.

I need and want to be able to give Advanced Directive or Advanced Consent. I do not understand what the difference is. But I want to give it NOW. After all none of us expects to live forever.

But I do not want those left behind to have to deal with the nuances of MY end of life. If I go into a coma I won't be able to give consent or even know what is going on.?? Will I ?

Just as it is now acceptable and the law for women to have CHOICE over their own bodies in the matter of abortion, so I believe I should have CHOICE in my end of life.

This is what I want to say in a public way, to honour my loved ones and all those who have had to leave the earthly bones to those left behind.

Not the “experts” nor the “lawyers” but us ordinary folk.

When I am gone, weep for me, but not too long. Drink a toast then sing a joyful song.

That’s all I want to be able to say.

Thanks you for your help,

Pat Portsmouth.