

# Hospice Angels

Category: Palliative and Hospice Care

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | September 1, 2024

I would not have survived caring for my parents at the end of their lives without the help of my hospice angels. Ma spent the final 10 days of her life in a palliative care facility; Dad endured the last three months of his life getting at-home hospice care. The individuals from hospice—nurses, occupational and physical therapists, counselors, and aides—not only supported my parents but also gave me the love and care I desperately needed.

It was Ma who went first; Dad and I spent every one of her final days with her. We'd walk into her room and find her wearing a clean nightgown—my favorite was a silk one whose pink hue reminded me of cotton candy; her hair would be neatly combed, and she'd look as comfortable as anyone in a semicomatose state could look. The nurses administered morphine to keep Ma comfortable, while the counselor spoke to Dad and me about death—how every living thing consists of energy and energy never dies. Even the high school volunteer nurtured and nourished us with her homemade chocolate chip cookies—almost as tasty as the ones Ma used to bake. When Ma died, the nurse held our hands and led us in the Lord's Prayer; she then made arrangements with the funeral home.

When it was Dad's time, someone from hospice visited our apartment four days every week. The PT encouraged him to walk so he could get to the bathroom without totally depending on me. The aide bathed him while I waited patiently outside the bathroom to wrap him in his favorite towel—and in my arms. A minister sat and chatted with me; he made me feel as if he had nowhere else to be but with me and no other job but to comfort me. Dad died in my arms at 2:30 a.m. on November 1, 2014. I called the nurse and hysterically told her what had happened. She stayed on the phone with me as she made the hour-long trip to our apartment, then held me in a loving hug as the funeral home carried Dad to the waiting hearse.

Hospice workers are special people. They root their lives in empathy by putting the needs of others above their own concerns; they listen without judging; and they never run out of tissues for the inevitable tears of the caregiver.

They are human beings with their own lives and challenges, but they are angels to those of us in need of them.

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