

From Branson, MO – Grateful Daughter

At the age of 89, our father had been hospitalized once again for congestive heart failure. Dad, a devout Christian, did not fear death. A farmer, he had spent his life being outdoors, active, self-sufficient, and in-charge of meeting challenges. Now, the confinement and procedures were taking their mental, physical and spiritual toll on him.

Dad only wanted to live the remainder of his life with as much dignity as possible. He became less cooperative with the medical procedures and he wanted to be left alone more and remain in his own home. He didn't feel that his wishes were being respected. Naturally we wanted to fulfill those wishes, but the thought of caring for his needs at home was overwhelming. Dad's longtime family physician suggested hospice services.

From our first meeting with the hospice staff, it became clear that these were folks who got things done! With quiet confidence and sincere compassion, they eased our fears, answered our questions and reassured us that we could, with their help, make dad comfortable and happy for as long as we were given.

Over the next few weeks, we developed a deep appreciation for all these folks, individually and as a team. Whatever we needed, big or small, late or early, we had only to make one call and we had the answers and the help we needed. We learned new skills for dad's physical care and new resources for the emotional care of our entire family. Through the initial rally of health and then his eventual decline, they were able to give us guidelines for what to expect, medically and emotionally.

During the final days, our hospice worker told us that if we wanted to take dad for a ride in the country, we should probably do it that day, even though it was raining. We did, and had a great time. By the next day, dad was no longer able to go. What a precious gift to be able to that with him. We were so grateful!

As the end came, we were able to spend quality time with dad, knowing the hospice team was ready to back us up when we were overwhelmed. Dad passed away peacefully with mom and several of his children at this side. The moment we had once dreaded had become the culmination of a peaceful journey.

- Peggy McGonegle, daughter of Archie Hartzell