

# “I am forever grateful that Hospice came into my life.”

Dear Priscilla,

I am enclosing a photo taken a few weeks ago that tells, more than words can say, what an incredible and wonderful organization you head. When the doctors gave me the “final verdict” a few months ago, a friend insisted that I let her

may be a somber situation, terminal cancer, but I am laughing and enjoying myself these last days – we actually have fun!

The Hospice goal is to bring comfort to people in my situation, but they surely go the extra mile. In my case, I had mentioned that I had

I am forever grateful that Hospice came into my life. It is true that staff reflects the leadership in an organization, and for that reason I want to personally thank you for making it all happen.

*Joan Barlow, East Hampton  
June 2000*

*In a letter to EEH Director  
Priscilla Ruffin*



call Hospice. I'd heard of it but didn't know much about it, and very grudgingly agreed to at least meet with them.

Your team's Judy and Pat came, and here I am now, hooked on Hospice and looking forward to each visit!

In the beginning I had been in enormous pain, and Hospice helped me with that. I know that all of your nurses and social workers are top notch – but somehow I cannot believe that anyone could be as good as Judy and Pat. They have a rare and wonderful combination of professionalism and knowledge mixed with warmth, caring and incredible senses of humor. This

done that “Horse Whisperer” thing – from fashion editor to Wyoming cowgirl – a few years ago, and that I missed being on a horse one more time. Pat literally jumped on this one and five days later I was riding this beautiful horse on a heavenly trail. She made all the arrangements and brought him out from Cutchogue. I am sure that this is not part of her job description! I was pinching myself to make sure it was really happening – it was truly wonderful.

Nancy Tammaro is my caregiver and an enormous help in my day-to-day living and comfort. She arrives with a smile and is willing to do whatever it takes – she, too, is a winner.



Dear Judy,

Mom went peacefully with wonderful memories of a life well lived. It was filled with blessings and warmth, loving and caring from friends like you. The work you did with Mom was truly special. She really did love you.

*Written by Joan Barlow shortly  
before her death, and sent,  
with additions, by her son,  
Christian Frahm, September 2000*



## “Hospice kept its promises and gave my mother caring compassionate control over her life till she finally rested in peace.”

To all of you at Hospice,

My dad and I feel blessed that you were there for all of us, and we thank you daily in our prayers. Hospice made our time bearable and my mother's last few months meaningful. You removed the helplessness we felt, and replaced it with the dignity we often speak of giving someone in their last moments. It is with gratefulness that I share these few thoughts in hopes that others may be helped as graciously as my mom and my family were this past spring.

Had I been prepared for this disaster I could not have saved my mother from the inevitable fate. However I could have spared my daughters, my father and myself the heart-wrenching trauma that comes with unraveling when you feel hopeless and inadequate in a position of helplessness.

The details of my mother's illness are irrelevant because each of us will have someone that we love suffer, and it will cause the same pain that my mother's illness caused me. I wasted a great deal of time and energy fighting a broken health care system that failed my mother and my family until we were introduced to Hospice. I summarize what I know to be true in the hope that others may reap the comfort that was granted to my family in this painful time.

It doesn't matter if you are fourteen or forty, but we all want to believe that someone is in charge and that they will be “fair” when it really counts. The technology of the

twenty-first century has spun us into such a tizzy that with the many balls we juggle, although we are impressive we become a player of many things and a master of none.



In health care it seems to be the opposite. Professionals tend to “specialize” in one area, which one may guess in the beginning to be a good thing. But as in every kind of relationship

communication is key.

My experience was that while learning about “the system” I was often stumbling because I was in my weakest moments. Someone I loved was very sick. I didn't understand what I was supposed to do or not do. I didn't know the rules, and the inevitable outcome that I had put off dealing with until now was, no matter how well I handled it, dismal.

I learned that doctors were people and not magicians. That hospitals were not glamorous and exciting as on television, but confusing and intimidating. I am educated and clear thinking most of the time, but when the person I loved was in question, I found that I too could easily become irrational.

One day our lives changed when a lone nurse took the time to take me aside and suggest I investigate Hospice. It was as simple as making one phone call and having the conversation I had imagined all along.

On the other end of the line was a reasonable and intelligent person who listened to my story and evaluated our case. Her kind and thoughtful words led me to believe

that indeed I could handle whatever would be asked of me. When we finished our conversation I made the arrangements immediately.

My mother arrived on Shelter Island in the back of my Durango thanks to the help of a family friend and a lot of spit and vinegar on my part. Within forty-five minutes she was greeted by a health care provider who remained by her side for at least four hours a day for almost two months.

This caring woman bathed her and kept her comfortable. The twenty-four-hour doctors and nurses visited as often as needed, and were there to talk me through many situations, sometimes just to keep me going while my heart and my spirit wavered. The social workers called and fought for me when needed. They visited my family as well as my mother, to talk through her fears and her concerns about the inevitable.

From the time they greeted us at the door with the proper paperwork, the Hospice caregivers walked us through my mother's illness and eventually came to my assistance down to the final phone call to the funeral home. Hospice kept its promises and gave my mother caring compassionate control over her life till she finally rested in peace.

The men and women of Hospice gave to my Mom and family what we really deserve – sadly, what doctors and hospitals and nursing care facilities oftentimes lack. Hospice celebrated whatever life my mother had left. For the remainder of my own, I will humbly be grateful. With great affection to all of you.

*Stephanie Needham, Shelter Island  
August 2000*

