

April 10, 2020 started as another routine day, but by 7:30pm, my life would be irrevocably changed. My husband of 25 years, Larry, had been diagnosed with advanced stage laryngeal cancer on March 25th requiring surgery; needless to say, we were both quite concerned, scared and anxious. The procedure involved removal of all lymph nodes in his neck as well as his voice box - open airway surgery. We were told by the team at Mayo that once the surgery was completed, it would be a complete recovery...he'd be fine; great news! We hugged each other, and assured ourselves that he will get through this. We hoped that the hospital would be able to move quickly to get it scheduled. Our hopes were fulfilled; surgery was scheduled for April 1st. As we were proceeding with pre-surgery registration, the conversation was interrupted; we were then told that due to Covid-19, all open airway surgical procedures were cancelled. Our elation that Mayo had expedited his surgery was annihilated.

A Zoom consultation with his Oncologist on April 3rd let us know that the team was discussing the best course of action; he would follow up shortly with the decision. On April 7th, another Zoom consultation occurred in which his Oncologist described an aggressive treatment plan starting with chemotherapy starting April 16th with radiation treatment to commence once the 3 courses of chemo was completed. He reassured us that as soon as the Covid-19 restrictions were lifted, the surgical procedure would proceed. Larry felt positive about the treatment plan; he had been at my side throughout my successful cancer treatment six years previously. The news was jarring, but we both felt confident.

As I opened, Friday April 10th started as a routine day. Larry spending the day in his office at an accounting practice that he had nurtured and grown for 20 years. I dedicated Friday's to standard household chores: laundry, grocery shopping, etc. The evening was quiet, dinner was finished and I was watching the evening news program. Larry walked by me to go outside, sit, smoke and think through an issue he mentioned with a client. Several minutes later, he opened the door and his shirt was covered in blood. He looked dazed, walked to the sofa and sat down. Panicking, I called 9-1-1 then sat next to him to help; he leaned against me. Medics arrived at the house in three minutes, performed CPR five times...he had passed within the minutes between when I called and they arrived.

News coverage of Covid-19 deaths focus on those unfortunate who die due to this virus; what the news does not record, nor will it be part of the statistics of this pandemic, are those deaths such as Larry's which could have been prevented. The life we had shared for 25 years and were planning going forward no longer exists. I have wonderful memories of a wonderful man, my best friend; what I don't have is that physical person.