

DNR

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December 2007

I got home to a message from Kathy Walker at Holy Cross, who wanted to talk about dad's release from the hospital. I went over to meet her.

DNR.

What's that? "Oh, we use these initials/acronyms around here all the time. It's "Do Not Resuscitate."

She babbled on about how it would be of no benefit to restart his heart and put him through so much pain, that other systems were shutting down -- the kidney system, the heart system, the circulatory system...like a baby; he's sleeping more, heart pumping slower....It's usually some sibling on the west coast who resists because they haven't seen the parent lately, bla, bla, bla...It was all becoming a blur....When she said that I could sign, I snapped out of the stupor and stopped her. "I couldn't make that kind of decision alone," I said. I politely excused myself, said that I would talk to my siblings, and walked out of the room. Strong, I thought. I was surprised that I didn't cry.

It was at the elevator that the tears started to fall. I spoke to the delivery man, trying to be cordial, but then had to turn away. From his corner, he finally said: "It will be ok. Put it in God's hands."

In my head I tried to comfort myself with a conversation that I had with a nursing home resident when another old family friend had died: "She's going to a place where we all want to go one day." I tried to pacify myself with that. Driving off to the rest of the day's responsibilities, I was distracted from my sadness.

After returning home, I talked to each one of my sisters about the conversation and the impending decision. "No dad, wouldn't want that. We don't want that." No tears or remorse from them. I was hoping that they would show more emotion. I could hear none in their voices. They seemed very objective.

I made my final call to my brother the next morning. He and I had been at the hospital together when my mom passed. I can still see the clock on the wall in the waiting room as we sat, marking that moment in her life and ours.

"They asked me about the DNR," I said. "Don't know if Karen has talked with you about that," I said. I explained it the best that I could. "Do Not Resuscitate."

"No, he wouldn't want to do that." He would want to go with some dignity."

"I understand. I agree," I said. And I did. "It's just hard to say," I said. Tears started falling. My voice quivered with the sound of pent-up emotions. He at least admitted, "It's a hard decision."

"We're all in agreement," I said. "We are." I confirmed, trying to convince myself. "I'll get myself together ... and call the doctor today."

If he stops breathing, do not resuscitate.

I hoped that I could say it.

