

My name is Laurie Smith. My late husband was Joe Smith.

Our ordeal began on January 20, 2021, while we were making funeral arrangements for Joe's mother. During that time, we learned that a family member had COVID-19 and had unknowingly exposed several of us. As a result, we postponed the funeral and began quarantining.

Shortly afterward Joe developed a persistent cough and increasing difficulty breathing. Hoping he could receive a breathing treatment and some more effective than over-the-counter medications, we went to the emergency room. I was not allowed to accompany him inside. I sat in my car and waited for him. A few hours later, Joe texted me that the hospital was admitting him overnight. The following morning, doctors started him on an IV infusion of remdesivir. Around the same time, the hospital was closing its COVID ward, so Joe was transferred by ambulance to a nearby hospital UNMC that specialized in treating COVID patients.

Over the next several days, Joe's condition steadily worsened. His texts became less frequent, and I received updates primarily from his doctors. One doctor informed me that the remdesivir was affecting his kidneys. Joe required increasing amounts of oxygen and was nearing the maximum level that could be provided without mechanical ventilation. They had to put a tube in his lungs to try and drain the fluids off of them.

Soon afterward, a doctor called to tell me that Joe would need to be placed on a ventilator. Before the procedure, the hospital arranged a Zoom call so that my daughter and I could speak with him. He was unable to communicate with us.

A few days later, another doctor called to request my consent for dialysis because Joe's kidneys had stopped functioning. I agreed, hoping that the treatment would help him recover and eventually come home.

Four days later, we received the devastating call that Joe had taken a turn for the worse. The hospital made an exception and allowed our children and me to come in and say goodbye.

On February 10, 2021 we said our final goodbye to Joe. He was 66 years old, a healthy hardworking man who had been looking forward to a well-earned retirement. Instead, our family lost a beloved husband, father, and grandfather far too soon,