

Molly Wilkerson's Story: Phillip's Passing Under Hospital Protocol

In Memory of Phillip Wilkerson • Passed Away January 31, 2021

A week before January 31st, 2021, I had to call the rescue squad for my husband, Phillip. While we were waiting, he was sitting on the edge of the bed and I was helping him get dressed. I was starting to cry, and sensing my fear, he wrapped his arms around me for a hug. We both told each other we loved each other, and he kissed my forehead and said, 'God's got a plan.' Soon after Phillip arrived at the hospital, he called to tell me that they told him he had that scam that they said was going around. They put him on the isolated ward, and because of the hospital protocols, we were not allowed to see each other. We talked on his cell phone for a few days until his battery didn't hold up anymore. After that, we talked on his hospital bedside phone. Then, all of a sudden, I couldn't reach him at all. The hospital had moved him to another bed right beside him, and they didn't even tell me.

On the evening of January 31st, 2021, just before Phillip passed away, the hospital called and asked what I wanted them to do if he went into cardiac arrest. They told me that he had put down 'no ventilator' on his chart. I told them his wishes were not to be put on a machine and said to respect his wishes. Hours later, another call came through. They told me he woke up to pee, took off his oxygen, and went into cardiac arrest. They said they had been working on him for 20 minutes and there was still no heartbeat. They asked me what I wanted them to do if they got a heartbeat back, pointing out again that he gave permission to resuscitate but not ventilate. I was terrified, and I said, 'Do what you got to do to save him.' Looking back, I feel like I was put under extreme duress to make a decision over something Phillip had explicitly stated he did not want.

A few minutes later, my daughter called me back and said, 'Mom, they've got a heartbeat back.' She said they were taking him to the ICU and venting him. Something inside me just told me that something was not right about that. It felt like everything was being read from a script. It felt wrong that all of a sudden, after they worked on Phillip for 20 minutes or more with no heartbeat, they got a pulse back the exact moment I gave permission. They went ahead and did it anyway, going completely against his wishes.

Sometime later, I got another call saying he was getting really uncomfortable. They explained what going that long without a heartbeat does to the brain and organs. My two daughters and I got on a four-way call to talk to Phillip while they unplugged him. I have no idea how we found the strength to do it, but we cried, we laughed, and we told him stories about camping trips and fun times we had. We told him that it was okay to go to God, that his dog Clyde was waiting for him, and how much we love him.

After he died under rigid hospital protocols, he was taken to the funeral home. They would not let him be viewed, and he had to be identified through a picture. My son-in-law had to identify Phillip through a picture. I don't understand any of this, and I probably never will. None of this was fair. These rigid hospital protocols completely went against basic human morals and compassion. They stripped away our right to be with the person we loved, leaving patients to suffer and die without their families by their side. It felt less like medical care and more like a heartless routine.

Back then, some doctors and nurses tried to stand up for what was right, but they were ridiculed and silenced for questioning what was happening to these patients. Today, I am so deeply grateful that more and more hospital staff are bravely coming forward to share what they saw and heard. We know in our hearts that none of this was right. For those of us who lived through it, we just know deep down that this wasn't just a set of medical rules—it felt like some type of real evil went on in those rooms. The truth needs to come out, and all families need real answers about what happened during those dark times. We need the full truth to be told, and we need justice to be served so we can finally find some kind of closure.

Sincerely,

Molly Wilkerson

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