# Caregiver Guide: 577 words with 1 photo/caption

Caregiver grateful for entrusting Cedar Valley Hospice with husband’s care

Jerry Easter always had a plan. Whether it was entering the Navy, engineering quality control for John Deere, orchestrating his weekly radio ministry show or organizing his 45th anniversary party.

According to Marie, Jerry was creative and had a lot of spunk. When he was diagnosed with COPD in 2005, it was painful to hear but not a diagnosis the couple felt they couldn’t handle – at least at first.

Over the next 9 years, Jerry became weaker and more reliant on oxygen.

“One day I noticed him really struggling to breathe,” said Marie. “I started to research how we might be able to get some more hands-on help for him. I knew he would want to stay at home, and I wanted someone I could trust to help me as the caregiver as well. I searched for an organization who was entrenched into the community.”

She found Cedar Valley Hospice. They had a “solid reputation,” she said, and “a lot of experience.”

Hospice care wasn’t something Jerry planned for, so his first reaction was to reject the idea. Especially since his preconceived notions of hospice included those of ‘giving up’ and ‘a quick death.’

“He was so strong-willed,” said Marie. “When I brought up Cedar Valley Hospice, he said, ‘No, I’m not ready to die.’ But I told him this could make it easier for me to take care of him.”

This resonated enough with Jerry to consult with his physician and agree to a visit.

“So I called Cedar Valley Hospice and they came that same day,” said Marie. “The next day after he signed was not a good day. I called them back and the nurse came right to the house, got a prescription called in, went to get it and brought it back to him. It was amazing.”

It didn’t take long for Marie and Jerry to realize their decision benefitted their family in so many ways. It allowed Marie to just be Jerry’s wife again (instead of his caregiver).

“It relieved so much anxiety knowing that whenever I called, they would be right there,” added Marie. “Plus, Jerry spent less time in the hospital and more time at home enjoying life with me.”

A couple times, Jerry’s breathing was worsening and instead of going to a hospital, he visited the Hospice Home. They both enjoyed the comforting environment and the access to a lot of the amenities she and Jerry would have had at home - a patio area, room to relax and a kitchen (where she kept a bottle of wine in the fridge.)

“After a while, their staff became our close friends,” added Marie. “They educated us and made it so the process wasn’t so overwhelming. I felt like it wasn’t a job for them – it was a personal relationship.”

Jerry was on the hospice program for over a year. It allowed him to remain positive, continue to Tweet and share his words of wisdom and spend quality time with his family. Marie credits Jerry’s longevity to Cedar Valley Hospice’s “expert care.”

“I have no doubt that without Cedar Valley Hospice, Jerry’s life would have been shortened,” said Marie. “I’m so thankful for all they did for him and for me.”

On May 2, 2015, Jerry died peacefully, surrounded by his loved ones.

“I wanted the best for my family, and they offered it,” added Marie. “As a caregiver, having their help was like having my own little angels right there.”

*PHOTO CAPTION: Marie Easter was a caregiver for her husband, Jerry, who died in 2015. Once they enrolled Jerry in Cedar Valley Hospice, it lessened her responsibilities as a caregiver and allowed her to focus on just being his wife again. Today, she and her entire family are still grateful for that decision.*

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