

### How I became the adult my parents needed by Kathleen Vallee Stein

I knew in my gut that my dad was dying. He was emaciated, unable to eat or drink, and struggled to breathe. The pain in his voice when he told me that he didn't want to live like this anymore weighed on my heart. I had to see what was right in front of my eyes.

I had been manager of an advocacy program for seniors on Medicare through the California Department of Aging and was well acquainted with the Medicare Hospice benefit. But when it was my own father who was dying, I couldn't find the words to talk to him about hospice; I was afraid he'd think I was giving up on him.

I asked Dad's physician, Dr. Archer to help us talk with Dad about Hospice. Mom and I stood by Dad's bed, as the doctor told him guys like him were considered terminal. Dad responded in a way none of us expected. He said he had had a good, long life and was grateful. Because he so graciously accepted his fate, the rest of my father's days were some of the most richly lived of his eighty years on earth.

The next day the Hospice nurse came into Dad's hospital room and said, "Mr. Vallee, I am here to talk about the rest of your life and how we can make it the best it can be."

Then she gave me a list of things I had to have ready before Dad went home, starting with medical equipment: a hospital bed, oxygen concentrator, and suction machine. I had to remove his meds and get new prescriptions under Hospice, and I needed to get his bed out the bedroom and into storage before the hospital bed arrived.

I left Mom at the hospital with Dad and got to work. I returned before lunch and told my parents that, for a fee, the nurse at their retirement community would keep track of his meds and an aide would deliver them to the apartment. My sister Anne had found a home health agency in town that would provide a caregiver for them for a few hours a day.

"Oh, no, Kathy - that's too expensive, we don't need it," they said, practically in unison as they shook their heads. Mom added, "I can handle it." I knew she couldn't. My parents believed they could "handle" this, but I knew that Mom wasn't physically strong enough to take care of Dad. She wouldn't be able to take him to

the bathroom or keep track of both their meds. Anne and I didn't live nearby so we wouldn't always be there.

Despite my trepidation in overriding my parents' wishes, I called the home health agency and ordered 24/7 caregiving. Then I called the nurse at

their retirement community and signed up for the prescription service, despite my parents' specific instructions not to. I was very afraid of their reaction, but I knew they needed the help.

Dad took a Medi-Cab home from the hospital and got settled in his bed with all the medical equipment in place. I was terrified that my parents would yell at me when the aides showed up. When I was growing up, Dad was the boss. He was in charge of Mom and the kids. I still viewed him as an authority figure, but he was very ill, and he needed my help.

When a young woman came to the door with their meds, Mom and Dad quietly took their pills and didn't ask about the cost. The first home health aide came at 6:00 p.m. and said she would stay until 6:00 a.m. Each time I held my breath. But they weren't mad at me. They were relieved! And then my dad thanked me. Better yet, when my husband called to see how he was doing, he praised me!

That evening before dinner, Dad wanted a martini. Now that he was home, he could have one whenever he wanted. As I prepared my father's favorite adult beverage, I realized that my parents and I were truly home. I was the mama bird now, perched on the edge of a nest that was not built with feathers, but with a hospital bed, an oxygen concentrator, suction machine, the retirement community staff, and a Hospice nurse. I had become the adult my parents needed.

Dad passed peacefully in his sleep, twenty-nine days later, in his own home, on his own terms, and in his own time.

See NBY! page 15 for details on her book: Loving Choices, Peaceful Passing:

Why My Family Chose Hospice

About the Author

Kathleen Vallee Stein was the Manager of the Los Angeles County Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP) administered through the California Department of Aging. She trained volunteer peer counselors in Medicare and related health insurance and then placed them in senior centers throughout Los Angeles County.

She also provided community education and advocated for changes in Medicare law to benefit seniors.

Ms. Stein's opinion pieces have appeared in the Christian Science Monitor, Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles Daily News, Pasadena Star-News, Orange County Register, and the Jewish Journal for more than twenty years. She writes about a variety of life experiences, such as caring for aging parents, raising children, and reflections on work, friendship, and nature.

When Stein's father was terminally ill, she experienced first-hand the difficulties families face when confronted with end-of-life issues. The dreaded decision to stop curative care and begin comfort care was monumentally difficult but resulted in a transformative experience for Ms. Stein.

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In 2016 for Milan Fashion Week, Hutton walked the runway for Bottega Veneta's Spring 2017 show.

Hutton was involved in a 27-year-long relationship with her manager Bob Williamson, who died in 1997. Williamson squandered some US\$13 million of her money. Hutton later explained that he had saved her life on five occasions and made sure that she "didn't get seduced by the work." She spoke of a void that Williamson filled: *I didn't have a father, and I wanted to be a child with a protector. I'd never seen a shrink, and there was a psychological situation that clearly needed to be addressed. But, you know, I wanted to see the world and how people lived and think about who are we, how are we, why is the world? And Bob did that for me.* Once he was gone, she went back to work modeling and made more money that she has kept for her life adventures; estimated net worth today is 20 million.

In October 2000, Hutton joined a motorbike group, which included actors Dennis Hopper, Laurence Fishburne and Jeremy Irons, to celebrate "The Art of the Motorcycle" exhibit at the Hermitage-Guggenheim museum in Las Vegas, Nevada. Prior to the journey, Hutton informed the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*: "I love the feeling of being a naked egg atop that throbbing steel. You feel vulnerable—but so alive." En route, Hutton crashed near Hoover Dam, on the border between the US states of Arizona and Nevada, going over 100 miles (160 km) per hour, and suffered multiple leg fractures, a fractured arm, broken ribs and sternum, and a punctured lung. Hopper later

recalled from before the start of the ride: "She had on a little helmet, sort of tied under her chin. It was cute. And Jeremy [Irons] came up to her and said, 'You got to be kidding.' He took it off her and gave her a proper helmet."

Hutton is the original vice-president of the Guggenheim Museum Motorcycle Club, and, in 2003, was a board member of the National Museum of Women in Arts in Washington, D.C., US.

In July 2013, Hutton revealed that she was in the process of writing her memoir, which may be titled *Smile*, and also explained the value of traveling and exploration in her life thus far: "whenever I came back from Africa or the Antarctic, head swelling with the beauty of it all, I found I was loving life again. You look different because of everything that has gone on inside of you..." Her *Becoming Sar'h* series of books were released beginning in 2017.

She has lived in NoHo in Manhattan in New York City. As of 2004, Hutton resided mainly in Taos, New Mexico, where she owns a prefab steel home and is currently single.

Lauren stays a private person and continues to lead a life of adventure. Did she ever write a memoir? We are not clear on that. She does model and walk the runway for top designers. Lauren also scuba dives, travels, and provides the best advice for life is to LOVE as many people as you possibly can.

## May TRIVIA

May has 31 days and is a month of spring. People born in May are more likely to be highly positive and hopeful - full of energy.

There is a cheese rolling contest to celebrate May Day in the town of Stilton, UK.

The traditional flower of May is known as Lily of the Valley and the stone is Emerald. This signifies youth and rebirth and is primarily mined in countries such as Brazil, Zambia, Colombia, and Afghanistan.

Odd holidays besides 'Star Wars Day' in the month of May. These include 'International Hamburger Day' and 'Dance Like A Chicken Day' and National Hamburger Day - May 28th

The 4th of May (or rather May the Fourth (may the force be with you)) is commonly known as Star Wars day.

Star Wars fans use this as an excuse to rewatch the movies. May Day is usually celebrated on the first Monday in May, where flowers are left on door knobs.

People born between the 1st and 20th of May are Taurus and are known as smart, trustworthy, and ambitious. People who are born on the 21st and after are Gemini, who are believed to be more dynamic and passionate.



**FLOWER:**  
Lily of the Valley

**STONE:**  
Emerald

