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The Luxury of Hope

Tuesday evening, a few weeks ago, I was driving to my son's soccer game when the phone rang. It was a doctor from the Intensive Care Unit at Scottsdale Healthcare on Shea Boulevard. They said my mother, who is 88, had a massive heart attack and we had two options: One was to operate, and the other was not to and let her pass away that evening. I drove straight to the hospital, and her condition got even worse. The team of doctors decided that, with her age and the condition of her heart, operating was not an option after all. They expected her to live maybe a few days as close to 80 percent of her heart was not working and the tissue was dead. I called my family, who all live out of town, and they all arrived the next afternoon. They are amazing and do public service as teachers and as a paramedic in Dallas. Her other grandson came from Chicago immediately.

The social workers made everything in this horrible time seem all right. They suggested Hospice of the Valley. I know of hospices as places where people check in but never check out. I knew what was next, and it was very difficult to be positive about this choice. We met the team at Hospice of the Valley, and they are like angels. I cannot describe how professional, caring and loving they are. They said, "We will grant Eleanore anything she may want. You can bring in dogs to visit. Once, someone brought in a horse."

When I arrived at the Sherman House behind the Mayo Hospital, I was truly amazed. This was a home for 12 people to spend their last few days or weeks. It is like a Ritz-Carlton resort with private rooms and patios. It made my family and me so happy but, even better, we could go back to Mom and explain she would love it.

We prepared ourselves for her last days, and I did not understand how someone could last with close to 80 percent of her heart not working. I asked Dr. Ramy Doss (M.D., F.A.C.C., F.S.C.A.I) that question. He gave me the best advice: "Michael, she can last one night or maybe six months—it all is up to hope and her will to live. Do not mislead her; however, give her hope that she may be able to return to her retirement home and her friends she loves so much."

So we gave her hope and encouragement and, two weeks to the day after her massive heart attack, we got the call that she was ready to leave the Hospice of the Valley and return home. In this experience, I learned that great luxury is not only time but the belief in oneself. Hope is something we all have inside us. Never quit or give up—when you do, it is over. She is back playing cards and had a nice family reunion at her bedside.

A special thanks to my family: We do not connect enough but this brought us all much closer forever. Thank you to everyone at Scottsdale Healthcare, the team at the Heart Clinic, Dr. Doss (you are correct—hope is powerful), Renee Moore, my wonderful staff and friends and the most special person in my life and soul mate, Katherine Chamberlain—a real champ in so many ways. Thank you. I love you.

In our annual Luxury Issue, we celebrate nice things. But remember that some luxuries, like hope and belief, money cannot buy.

Have a happy and safe Thanksgiving,

Michael S. Dee *President and Publisher*