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Hospice nurse recognized for photographs



Asante hospice nurse Mary Landberg described in one entry for her book, “Enduring Love,” how she began her photography sideline more than five years ago while caring for a 94-year-old World War II veteran during his final hour of life.

The man’s beloved grandson called and lamented not being there to hold his grandfather’s hand. Mary snapped a photo of her holding the dying man’s hand, and texted it to the grandson – who immediately responded, “He looks so peaceful and he isn’t alone. That is all I could wish for.”

“From that day forward, I started carrying a camera in my hospice bag along with my stethoscope,” Mary wrote. “I became profoundly aware of the great similarity in the dying process regardless of economic status, age, cause or place of death. The

loving way people touch each other is universal.”

Mary, who now describes herself as a hospice nurse and photographer, has shot end-of-life hand portraits with more than 350 hospice patients and their families since that first smart phone picture. The photos and Mary’s eloquent remembrances of the moments have filled two volumes – “Hospice Portraits” and “Enduring Love.”



Now Mary has been selected to have her photographs featured on the cover of the “[Journal of Pain and Symptom Management](#),” each month for a year. She will attend the national conference next February of the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine, which publishes the journal. Mary will display her photographs and talk about her project with hospice and palliative care professionals from throughout the U.S.

“Enduring Love,” [Mary’s current project](#), is a collection of more than 100 portraits of hospice patients with family and friends. Someone in each of the portraits has since died, and many of photographs were taken on the last day of the hospice patients’ lives. Mary offers the photographs at no charge to the families of her patients

The volume also offers glimpses into hospice care, the process of death and dying, and the love and life that shines through it all.

One entry in “Enduring Love” is about Melvin, who was confined by ALS to “a contraption that was **(read more, next page)**

part reclining wheelchair and part restraint,” Mary wrote.

“Melvin’s well-intended words were too garbled for me to fully understand,” she said. “I gave him permission to just nod best he could to yes and no questions. It quickly became clear that while it was nearly impossible for him to speak, Melvin was alert and quite sharp by his ability to communicate by nodding his confined head to my questions about pain, hunger and how frustrated I thought he must be. My questions grew from superficial inquiries about the physical to the roots of how badly he must be suffering.

“Melvin was at peace with his state of being,” Mary wrote. “His big brown eyes reflected an essence about him that spoke of absolute ease. He held himself in a state of contentment that I long for.”

