

Lillian  
Kaplan

Hamden, CT

Born in New  
Haven

9/8 17 July

- >
- > Hello Dad, Desmond, Margie, Anne, Bruce, David, Liza, Beckie, Kerry,  
> Snow, Dave, Sylvia, Amy, Glenn, Josh, and Isabelle:
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- > I hope you are all well. I am writing to tell you that I have decided to  
> end my life soon, by my own hand. I have made this decision, after much  
> careful thought, on my own because it is the only way to avoid much more  
> devastating suffering for myself and for Merrily. I am sorry if this is  
> shocking or upsetting to you.
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- > We are now about to hire a part time aid to supplement the four hours of  
> aid time we get from Medicare; but before long I will need full time  
> professional care. Right now Merrily wakes up in the middle of the night  
> and turns me; before long I will need more attention than she can give  
> me at night. Eating is becoming very difficult because my right arm is  
> weakening (the left is far worse than the right). Many other everyday  
> activities are impossible or nearly so for me to do alone. As you know,  
> it's precarious for me to stand, let alone take a step. I am severely  
> fatigued all the time, and often intensely anxious. At times it's hard to  
> open my left eye, and that will worsen. Worst of all, breathing is  
> slowly becoming more difficult.
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- > It's not only these basic manual things that I can't do. I don't really  
> have a creative life because creativity takes energy, and my energy  
> level is so low I need to nap and rest constantly. I can't get out  
> easily and participate in the world--it takes a caregiver and enormous  
> amounts of time and preparation to do that. I become strangely anxious  
> when anything fast moving or loud or bright or sudden happens. It's a  
> process of shutting down, I think. I have stayed this long because I  
> wanted to be sure there was no chance of arresting the progression of  
> the disease, because I love seeing all of you and I love life. Here is  
> nothing very compelling that I can do, and life is becoming diminished  
> day by day. With ALS, for me it's necessary to pick a point that is enough,  
> because it's possible to be kept alive for years, locked in to a  
> motionless body, unable to communicate in meaningful ways, and that is  
> unacceptable to me.
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- > In fact I have had a fabulous life and done nearly everything I could  
> want to do, gone nearly everywhere I could want to go, and had nearly as  
> many wonderful people in my life as I could expect to have.

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> I see this as a way to end the violent carnage of my body by this  
> disease while I still have some quality in my life.  
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> I have found a way to end my life and prefer to do so alone or with  
> Merrily at my side if she wishes. It requires just a little strength and  
> dexterity, about the amount I still have. I may want friends nearby to  
> help guard for visitors and to help afterward with getting my body off  
> for nerve tissue donation for ALS research. I do not want anyone else to  
> be there. I feel that I have gotten to say goodbye to all of you in  
> recent months (save for Dave Gardner, so goodbye to you via Snowy), and  
> it's not necessary to have any of you there on the day I do this.  
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> I am writing you so that you will not have to wonder, and Mer won't have  
> the burden of explaining what happened or why. I'm not asking for your  
> approval, only that you honor my judgement.  
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> Every one of you has given me great gifts of caring and comfort and love  
> during this illness, and I have gotten more kindness and compassion from  
> friends than I could possibly have expected.  
>  
> Please respond and let me know you got this message.  
>  
> I love you,  
>  
> Steve