



Then My Husband Popped Him Into The Freezer!

A story from South Africa

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I am a doctor, and live in South Africa. While travelling abroad with my husband we heard that our dear friend, neighbour, and fellow farmer was dying from a rare cancer. We had decided many months ago that we would help his wife to look after him when the time came, so we cancelled our holiday to return home to nurse him.

He died in his wife's arms in late spring, with all his immediate family close by, including his two teenage children. In spite of the pain we felt, we took comfort knowing that he was able to spend this important time with his family at home, and his death had been symptom free.

When our friend died, we gently laid him out after leaving him with his family for an hour or so, and then my husband popped him in to the freezer that we use for our raspberries!

It may sound a bit morbid, but people here have been burying their own for years. When my father-in-law died in Cape Town, my brother-in-law put him into the back of his pickup truck, and drove him for twelve hours back to the farm where he was buried.

Our friend's funeral was deeply cathartic. No undertakers, just fellow farmers and farm workers. The farmers and workers dug the grave, and the pall bearers gently lower our friend's body into it during the ceremony. At that stage, all the local men who had been close to him piled in earth with shovels. Part of his eulogy was in the local Sesotho language, and many of the songs were also in Sesotho and another local language, IsiXhosa. With so many beautiful singers present, it was impossible not to cry.

This allowed us to truly mourn, which I think is so much healthier than other funerals I have been to where everyone tries not to show emotion.

We also found comfort from the rituals that our friend, who is an Anglican priest, conducted after he died. Neither of us are religious, but a few days after the funeral, together with some friends, we built a cairn (stone circle) in memory of our friend. We sat in the circle and talked of all the wonderful times we had had with him, and how much each of us in the circle loved each other. It was rather wonderful.