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 To: [LSIC](#)  
 Subject: My Euthanasia story  
 Date: Thursday, 19 May 2016 4:52:27 PM

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To Whom it may concern.

My life was over taken by this subject, accused of killing my sister and lies that were told to me over 20 years regarding her death. **Please read this story, use it if it helps, or call me to speak at any inquiry...I would be happy to if it helps legalise Euthanasia.**

**On the day my poor Dad was burying one daughter the Hospital lied and threatened to charge his other daughter (me) with murder.**

I have been faced with the situation 4 times...too many for anyone to deal with. **My sister and her Lawyer [REDACTED] made the first living will passed in parliament but her wishes were continually ignored.** The hospital lied and made me believe I had killed my sister and I lived with this for nearly 30 years until I found out the truth last year. NO ONE should have to go through this.

### **JoAnn Dolan's story**

It was September 26th 1987 when, as usual, I visited my sister, JoAnn, in hospital. JoAnn had a car accident when she was 28yo and broke her neck, like Christopher Reeves (Superman) she was the highest level living quadriplegic in Australia. Unlike Reeves she managed to get off the respirator and lived independently with the help of 2 carers who attended to her 24/7. She wanted to die.

She'd had a procedure the day before she died. The procedure was like an epidural but with an experimental drug called Phenol. This was to numb the constant pain she felt even though she was a very high level quadriplegic. She'd had the procedure done twice before but this time it all went wrong.

When I arrived JoAnn was laying in bed motionless, tears trickled down her face. Her personal two Carers, which she always had by her side, told me what happened. Phenol travels through the blood so she had been strapped to an upright board for the procedure, allowing gravity to prevent the drug from travelling to her head. But travel it did and **now the only moving part of her, her face, was paralysed too.**

She had 'arrested' during the operation and the Doctors revived her even though **she had made Australia's first 'living will' which stated she did not want to be revived ever, never, at any time.** Fury took over and I hunted down the Doctor literally screaming at him. "Why did you revive her, you knew she didn't want to live anymore? **She's died 11 times and yet you ignore her wishes and keep reviving her. Do you think you're a god or something? What do we have to do to get through to you people?" I vented my spleen.** The Doctor sheepishly told me that if a someone dies during a procedure then he is legally obligated to revive the patient. "So what's the good of a living will if you keep ignoring her wishes?" I cried. "You knew damn well how she feels".

I stormed off back to her bedside, she'd heard every word and the tears kept falling. "She wants her medication, she hasn't had any since she came here and

now they won't give it to her" one of the carers said. JoAnn was chemically addicted to Endone (a morphine) and Ephedrine (commonly known as speed). She needed Endone to kill the pain and Ephedrine helped with her breathing which was compromised by her high level broken neck.

Any drug addict will tell you that withdrawal from morphine is two fold, physical and mental, and its awful. At the Doctors' whim they would stop her meds even though they supplied boxes and boxes of the stuff for her to use at home. They'd stop it, then give it to her, then stop it again...but only while she was in hospital, seems they weren't concerned about the massive amounts of prescriptions they gave her.

"If she wants it then let's give it to her" I said. This was what we always did during her hospital stays because what JoAnn wanted she should get. **Without her arms, unable to do what she wanted, we all respected the fact we needed to 'use our arms' to do what ever she needed.** We all felt that to not do so took away her independence and all she had left in life was her voice and words.

JoAnn had a nose tube inserted after the procedure so the Carers and I crushed up the two pills, added a little water and fed the powder down the tube, squeezing it down to get through. About 10 minutes later a nurse walked in and said they had decided to give her the medication. The silence was deafening, we all just looked at each other. I stared at JoAnn, was this heaven sent? I looked up and in my heart said thank You. I went home knowing she could handle the extra medication, she had a habit, but I hoped this time maybe it might grant her wish.

Several hours later the head of the Spinal Unit and several other Doctors visited JoAnn's bedside. Dr U. asked her if it was her wish to not have any medical intervention should she arrest again. He asked her to blink, once for yes, twice for no. She blinked once. Finally after eight years of telling them it seems they got the message.

**At around 6am I got a phone call from a Doctor, JoAnn had arrested and had just passed away and according to her wishes she was not revived. His next words were "Can we keep her body for research?".** So much for empathy. I told him no, they'd experimented on her for eight years and it was enough. He asked if that was the opinion of our parents, I said defiantly "yes its how we all feel but I'll ring them and ask. Call me back later. Both Mum and Dad were upset and angry at the thought and said no. The Doctor rang me back about an hour later and I told him it was a definite no, they could not keep her for their experiments.

The next day at the Funeral Home while we were organising things the Under-Taker went off to ring the hospital for release of JoAnn's body, but when he came back into the room his face was ashen. He told us that **the hospital had refused to sign the death certificate as they did not know cause of death and her body had been sent to the city Coroner for autopsy.** Someone had to go in and identify her body.

## The Morgue

We all fell silent. I looked at Dad, his face drained of any colour and for a second I saw horror flick across his eyes. I quickly jumped in and said I'd go. (It wasn't until Dad died and I read his file about WW2 and what he'd been through that I understood his reaction.) Mum said she'd go with me.

"What will she look like" I asked Mum. "Blue" was all she said. We went into the reception and the Coroner was at the desk. I asked him why we had to do this as she'd died in hospital and they knew who she was. His reply stunned us, **"When I get the body of a young healthy 34yo woman who dies of no known cause I must do an autopsy".** "What do you mean by healthy", I said, **"She's been a quadriplegic for 9 years and had a phenol block at the Austin where she arrested during the procedure.** The hospital knows what happened and they just want her body for research, that's why they are doing this because we refused." The Coroner looked puzzled and got out the file the hospital had sent him. **The file was empty except for a form saying absolutely nothing about her condition or the procedure she'd had.**

By coincidence the Coroner recognised our surname and said he knew my uncle Tommy which made us feel a bit better about the situation. I felt we could trust him. He tried to calm us, "Let me assure you I am not in the business of research, I have to do an autopsy and am surprised at the lack of information the hospital have given me. **I promise you once I find out the cause of death that will be the end of it. I naturally couldn't have known she was a quadriplegic, laying there she looks like nothing was wrong...** Are you ready to identify her?"

It was just like you see on TV. We stood outside a room with a big window and the Coroner drew back the curtains. Mum and I gasped and burst into tears. Looking at a body more than 24 hours later is not pretty. She was white, slightly yellowish and still had the same expression that she'd died with, it looked like the hospital had done nothing to prepare her. The only thought that went through my head was the words to a song: "That her face, at first just ghostly, Turned a whiter shade of pale."

The funeral was the next day and we all gathered beforehand, the family, a few close friends and JoAnn's two Carers. Dad came into the sunroom where we all sat waiting for the funeral cars to arrive. **"They haven't released her body yet" he said looking stressed.** I was sitting next to the Carers and our hearts dropped. **One of the girls whispered to me "could they detect the extra morphine we gave her?"** I responded by saying they'd have to notice it if they did blood tests. Our hearts nearly stopped. **"Could we be in trouble?"** she whispered back. That I didn't know, but we were petrified.

Dad ordered everyone to stay in the sunroom while he made a few phone calls. In my mind I imagined he'd be ringing Uncle Tommy who knew the Coroner, JoAnn's lawyer [REDACTED] and if we were in trouble maybe he'd ring a few friends in the Police Force. Who could know what was going on? **The Carers and I were in shock, it had never really occurred to me that perhaps we had caused her death but now it seemed we could be in big trouble.**

The cars had arrived and the funeral time was looming. Finally after what seemed like hours Dad came in looking relieved. **"The hospital has signed the death certificate and her body has been released."** Confused and relieved the Carers and I just stared at each other. **Did they detect the extra morphine dose and if so what happened... maybe they didn't do blood tests...my head raced.**

We all hurried to the cars and then the Funeral Parlour, just making it in time. It was a sad event, one of the hardest days of my family's lives. I had lost my best friend, sister and soul mate.

## Search for Her Body Parts.

Dad had never talked to me about what had happened before the funeral and I didn't tell anyone what the Carers and I had done. I didn't obsess over it but every so often I wondered about the blood test she must have had during the autopsy and why no one mentioned it. So I kept my secret, telling myself that perhaps the extra dose of Morphine had not caused her death.

One day a parcel arrived for me and inside was the published book JoAnn had commissioned before she died. The title shocked me - 'Monster in the Bedroom'. I flicked through the book reading the beginning then the last page. The **last paragraph drew a scream from deep inside me, I was shaking, stunned and confused. The paragraph said that 'JoAnn's spinal cord and brain had been removed and sent to the Austin Hospital for research'. How did this happen after the whole family had told the Hospital and the Coroner we did not want this, neither did JoAnn.**

I immediately rang [REDACTED]. [REDACTED], I've just received a copy of JoAnn's book and it says her spine and brain were used by the Hospital for research...how did this happen when it was against our wishes. What did we bury Francis, a bag of skin?" [REDACTED] was shocked, he said he had no idea it was against our wishes and he didn't know about the research. He was obviously upset, I was crying with shock and fury and he was speechless. But our conversation didn't answer any questions.

So after 4 years JoAnn's death raised its ugly head as it did time and time again over the next 20 years, almost like JoAnn wanted the truth to come out. **I wanted to know how the Austin got JoAnn's body parts, but I was too scared to bring it up publicly because I thought perhaps the Austin still had the blood test results to use against us 'just in case' and this may cause the Carers and myself big problems. So this began 8 years of wondering what happened.**

**I could only work with what I knew. I had JoAnn's death certificate stating Phenol as the cause of death, so what happened? The Coroner had assured Mum and I this would not happen. Was there a conspiracy between the Hospital and Coroner? Did they work in cahoots to get the body?** JoAnn's body was of enormous interest to the Doctors at the Austin because JoAnn was the highest level quad to live independently and live as long as she did. Similar to the level of break poor Superman, Christopher Reeves had, but JoAnn defied medical opinion and managed to free herself of breathing through a respirator, hence the need for Ephedrine (Speed) to get her system charged each morning to be able to breath.

**The Doctors had many theories they wanted to confirm.** They believed a tumour formed at the break site a few years after a break. They also felt that at the time of breaking a neck that oxygen is deprived and this, they thought, caused a degree of brain damage. They had used this line a few times when JoAnn bucked the system, or told us of horrendous behaviour by staff at the hospital. Once I was taken aside by the Matron of the Spinal unit after a suspicious death on the ward which had upset JoAnn. She told that I shouldn't place a lot of belief in what JoAnn said as she had brain damage. Complete rubbish.

**Apart from wondering how this happened to JoAnn's body I formed the belief that they probably had her in jars with formaldehyde to use at Medical Schools.** As she had broken all medical records on high level

quadriplegia, which in my opinion they knew very little about, her spine would have answered many of their questions **I pictured the jars on a shelf in a cupboard, but my hands were tied by my belief that the blood test results could be used to shut me up.**

Several years in the later part of the '90's the **'body parts scandal' hit the press.** Body parts had been found in hospital waste bins and there was a public outcry. I bit the bullet and decided to take action. **I wrote a long letter to Dr Michael Wooldridge who was the Liberal Minister for health** at the time and to my surprise he responded within a week. He told me he had been in touch with the head of Pathology at the Austin, gave me the Pathologist's name, contact details and said the Pathologist was expecting my call regarding my concerns.

I rang straight away and the Pathologist and we arranged an appointment for that same week. He arrived with a 'social worker' in tow...incase I needed help he had said.

We sat inside and I began my story which hinted at a conspiracy between the Hospital and the Coroner. He listened letting me explain my version of events (without mentioning the Morphine) and my image of her in jars. His response was that he could see how I came to this conclusion but "let me assure you" **he said, "there was no conspiracy. The Austin Hospital is the pathology centre for all autopsies by the Coroner so that is why her parts were sent there. And in all autopsies the common practice is to remove the spinal cord and brain for the pathology. There was no research" he assured me. "So what did you do with her spine and brain, which to me are the essence of life?" I asked. "They would have been disposed of like any medical discards" he explained. "So you mean she went into a dump bin with old bandages and things?" I asked. Gently he said "Yes". "Great work" I replied, "So JoAnn was chucked out with the rubbish".**

Then the Pathologist asked me **"how did you manage to live with this all these years, imaging her body parts in a jar, that must have been horrific for you".** I wasn't in the mood for pleasantries and blatantly told him that was probably the most stupid question I'd ever heard. "What did you expect me to do just lie down and die? I have a child to raise, I have to get up everyday and exist, you go on living with it, I mean really what else could you expect me to do?" So I had my answer (or so I thought at the time). No scheming just medical practice common to all autopsies.

**But I later found out otherwise...**

Dad died on 6th August 2007, 10 years after the Austin's Pathologist 'explained what happened'. In that 10 years I believed what this man told me. **Apart from thinking of JoAnn in a dump bin, I was a more settled about everything that had occurred. I never told Dad or Mum anything that I have written so far, we find it hard to talk about JoAnn in a family setting.**

Dad organised his death, funeral and even interviewed the man 'who was going to plant him'. He didn't want us burdened by his death after the JoAnn experience.

After the wake Sis and I were talking about JoAnn's Funeral. I said I remembered all the phone calls Dad had made...(it was now 20 years later). Sis

was young when JoAnn died and she said **"I don't remember much except Dad told me later that the phone calls were because the Austin told Dad that the blood tests showed extra morphine and they would insist charges of murder be laid unless Dad gave them her body for research. So he had to agree." I went cold..."that was me".**

**So now I had my worst fears confirmed...I killed my sister.** From that day in 2007, 20 years after she died I found this out. I knew, Sis, the family and many others knew of JoAnn's quest to die, but that didn't really make it easier. **The family had talked about it for years as did JoAnn, who had even offered my poor old Nana a lot of money to do it. But Dad told me sternly one night "if anyone is going to do it it'll be me. I've lived my life and you've got a son, so leave it up to me".** That was an order. He died believing I had killed JoAnn and, knowing Dad, he would have hated himself for not acting before me, for letting me do it. **On the day he buried his first born Daughter he was threatened that his second Daughter was going to be charged with murder. No one should go through that.**

**I believe in euthanasia, I'd promised her during the first days of her accident that if she gave it a go for 6 months after she got out of hospital and still wanted to die, then I'd help. I also remembered the day the she died at the hospital when the nurse came in to give her the second dose of morphine, how I had thanked the universe for taking the deliberate decision of killing her out of my hands.**

Friends tried to convince me **it was what JoAnn wanted, there should be no guilt and I knew this...but.** You can take the girl out of the Church but you can't take the Church out of the girl, I wondered what was right and what was wrong...Who could know? If you believe in Euthanasia does that make it right? God knows.

**For the next 8 years I tossed with these thoughts,** when I moved to the country one of my best friends died slowly of cancer. **Her file at the end of her bed said 'no invasive procedures' yet there she lay with about 10 tubes in her.** She was angry and refusing to look at me. I said "You're angry with me because you didn't want this did you". She turned to me, her big eyes filled with tears and she nodded. So again I turned on a Doctor, nice at first then vicious, demanding to know why her wishes were being ignored. I went off like a cracker. The Doctor was dumbfounded and walked off, I threw myself on top of her, we were both crying and I said 'Darling I've done all I can do'. That was the last time I saw the friend I'd met a week after JoAnn died and who had filled that void like a sister.

I guess that was the turning point for me, full of grief for my latest loss brought all the horrors of JoAnn's fight to die came up again. **So I decided to discuss the whole JoAnn saga with my Doctor and Counsellor.** She listened, occasionally interrupting, asking me what time did JoAnn get the double dose of morphine and how much later did she die. I told her it was 12 hours after the doses that JoAnn passed away. **"Well" she said, "if she died 12 hours later I doubt very much that it was because of the morphine.** Normally with a morphine overdose death comes quickly, so I don't believe that was the cause, which means you didn't kill your sister". I was surprised by this and told her the story that **the Pathologist from the Austin had told me in the late 90's, about the Austin being the pathologists for the Melbourne Coroner and it being standard to remove the brain and spine. Dr. Claire shook her head "I'm afraid none of that is true, it is not standard procedure to remove the entire spinal column and brain for autopsy. and I have**

**never heard that the Austin Hospital is the pathology for the City Coroner, in fact it is not."**

Confusion reigned. **So if I didn't kill her why did they tell that to Dad and if the Austin is not the pathology for the Coroner and the death certificate states JoAnn died of Phenol, what the hell was going on? Was the death certificate falsified? And why did the Head of Pathology tell me a bunch of crap ten years after JoAnn's death?** The conspiracy theory was back and I had no idea how any of it fit together. **All I knew for certain was that the Austin Hospital wanted her body and they got it.**

For a year or two I wondered and occasionally obsessed over the unanswered questions. One night I decided I had to know the answers. **Too many people had been hurt through all of this to let it go. I couldn't let it go. But who to ask and who could I trust? I thought about this for ages, who could you trust anymore?**

I needed someone who could access records and that I could trust. Then like a bolt it hit me. I remembered a Doctor had treated JoAnn privately since her accident. He was a man Dad trusted and often rang for advice.

Doc remembered me well so I started explaining the reason for the call, **that there was some kind of fraud over JoAnn's death.** He stopped me right there and said not to say any more on the phone. So we arranged to meet near his stomping ground and thankfully one of my best friends lived there too, so we organised to meet at her house a few nights later. My friends sat in the lounge room in the dark listening to every word, and fair enough, she knew it all from over the years. I also felt I needed a witness.

I told Doc. my story with him stopping me now and then. He said there was no fraud with regard to the Coroner. He had seen the autopsy report and the Coroner had found 'JoAnn had died as a result of the procedure, the Phenol reached her brain. He said he had visited JoAnn at her house the day before she checked into the Austin for the procedure. He'd told her not to have it, if she did it would kill her. The two procedures she'd previously had were lower in the back but this one was going to be higher near her neck. **Doc said he'd always been against the Phenol Block because it was still experimental, not an approved procedure. He'd warned JoAnn against it.**

**"What about the Coroner's report and the morphine level" I asked. Doc said the morphine level would have been raised a bit, but JoAnn died 12 hours later so it had not caused her death.** Also after 12 hours the amount would not be significant. He said "If Doctor U and the others who visited JoAnn several hours after the doses to discuss not resuscitating her should she 'arrest' again, then it seems obvious that these Doctors felt JoAnn was alert and she respond. **If she was affected by morphine it would have been noticed."**

I said I'd believed JoAnn could have handled the extra dose anyway and Doc agreed. He'd never wanted her to use Endone and was angry that the hospital prescribed it. I commented that she had a cupboard full of it and other drugs and he knew about it. He said she was clinically addicted.

So I asked **"If she died from the Phenol Block as the Coroner said, how could the Austin say it was the morphine that killed her?"** Doc said just a few words that floored me and answered every question I'd needed to know. **"The hospital lied. They lied because some young doctor wanted to**

**earn some brownie points and get her body."**

"The Coroner would have sent the autopsy report to the Austin with his findings that her death was a result of the Phenol Block procedure, a procedure that was still experimental. The Hospital would then have to sign the death certificate, so the coroner didn't falsify anything. The hospital would have been worried as this put the spotlight on them and they could possibly be answerable for doing the procedure," Doc explained. **"The Austin doctors would have noticed a slightly higher morphine count so they used it to get her body and no questions would be asked about the Phenol. You did not kill your sister"**

I was furious and upset "But what about the phone call to Dad on the day of the funeral when they said they'd press charges?" Doc just repeated "It was all a lie". I was stunned **"You mean on the day my poor Dad was burying one daughter the bastards lied and threatened to charge his other daughter with murder?"** How anyone could be that calculating and callous is beyond me.

The simplicity of it astounded me. Then I told him about the visit I'd had about 10 years after her death regarding her body parts. **"That pathologist lied too" he said. So even after 10 years the Austin was still covering its tracks!**

The Doc took my hands and looked me in the eyes **"You had nothing to do with JoAnn's death, you did not kill your sister" he repeated.** We talked a while more and he told me what JoAnn had accomplished.

"Because of JoAnn's death Phenol has been banned from use. Also because of the manner that the hospital treated JoAnn's body, laws were changed in parliament to ensure the 'rights of the dead'. Before her the dead had no rights but now it is in law to uphold the wishes of the deceased so what happened to JoAnn can't happen again," he said.

So that was it. **After 29 years of going through so much it just came down to a young doctor trying to score brownie points by getting her body.** I could go to her files in my room and look up the bastard's name, I could confront him, but I can't spend the rest of my life engrossed in revenge or carrying the banner for JoAnn. Half of my life has been affected by it all and I have to let it go now, its been too long and too stressful.

Apart from the affect its had on me, **my saddest thoughts are that Dad died believing I'd killed JoAnn, he would have felt guilt that he didn't act before I supposedly did and help put JoAnn at rest. Also I am so sad that he'd been put through hell the day of the funeral facing the loss of 2 daughters because of a stupid lie.**

The affect its had on me now that I know the truth is - **I don't trust anyone, not Doctors or Lawyers, not hospitals, Priests, the Church or the 'system'.** This year I've become a bit of an activist...because I can't stand any bullshit from anyone, someone has to stick it to the system and I don't care who I stick it too if they deserve it. Bring it on! I care for the underdog, the disabled and unfortunate and I can't let them be screwed like we were.

JoAnn's plaque reads 'Free at Last' and now that the truth is out I know she is finally free.

*I dedicate this to Jay Franklin who has suffered since the day he was born and*



*wants the peace denied to him...like hundreds of others and their families who suffer. See my blog at [ireckonblog.com](http://ireckonblog.com) for this story and others)*

Sincerely

Maureen McManamny

[REDACTED]