

INTERVIEW WITH SCOTT GREATHOUSE -- FEBRUARY, 1995 (PART 3 OF 4)

In his later hospital stays we could have left and Dave would have been OK, but nobody wanted to leave him there alone by then. It was hard for him to go to the bathroom and basically he didn't want to be alone. He wanted somebody there just to either talk to, or just in case something happened. If he had to get out of bed or something he had all these lines coming from him everywhere, and they could get tangled easily, and Dave was kind of clumsy already. It was hard for him to maneuver around--he didn't have a lot of energy, even to get out of bed--without help. He could have fallen or gotten dizzy or whatever. Dave got pretty spoiled by us. I think he was used to somebody being there all the time, and I wasn't comfortable leaving him alone. A couple of people were able to come up and help us and hang out with Dave for a while so we--or whoever was there--could get a break. Thank God school wasn't going on then for me.

Basically it was my mom, Linda and myself who were at the hospital the most the last episode in the hospital, the last month and the last week. Dave probably shouldn't have come home that week that he was home, but I'm glad he got to. At the time we both wanted out of that hospital. *Bad*. He just wanted to be in his own home. He wanted to be with Freddie, our dog. He didn't want nurses coming in and jostling the bed and moving him around and every few hours, taking his blood pressure and his temperature and He was sick and tired of it. He didn't give a shit whether he was going to run a fever. He wanted to be in his own bed in his own house and have privacy. I think we both did. At that point Linda and I looked like shit. We weren't getting a lot of rest at the time.

So we went home that week and we set up that room. Dave had gotten a pump for his meds. We set that up and all his medications in that room. I typed up a schedule because I was still trying to work at night. I did work here and there although it didn't really work out that much; I think I worked one or two nights that whole month he was in the hospital. But just in case I was there and was trying to sleep or whatever, we had a schedule with his medications. And it was a full-time job. See, at that point Dave wasn't doing his meds himself. He didn't have the energy.

That last week was really tough because everything was reaching a high point. Dave had been talking a lot and he was in pain. The pneumonia was out of control. The CMV was out of control, and he was taking Foscarnet and Cytovene for it every day. He couldn't breathe very well. He wasn't sleeping very well; on and off, in and out. He was coughing a lot and had a terrible cough. He was taking cough medicine--there was medicine for everything--but shit, he was really, really bad off. And he was pretty demanding, bless his heart.

I would go out at two or three o'clock in the morning to Walgreens or whatever. It was around the clock. Linda came over one afternoon--she started in the afternoons--and when she got there I just went to the bedroom because I wanted to sleep. I was sleeping when I could, which wasn't too often. But she came over, and I tried to take a nap. And Dave was just so *chatty* all the time. After she'd been there a while he asked where I was and said, "I'm going to go talk to Scott." And she said, "*NO*, you're not! Leave him alone." So he asked her to make him a pot of tea or something, and she went downstairs. And while she was downstairs he came over across the hall and came in there where I was sleeping. I remember I woke up when he walked in, and he said, "What are you doing?" I remember I told him, "I'm SLEEPING! Get out! Leave me alone!!!" But he would do that kind of thing all the time if he wanted to talk to you. I kind of liked that--it was

funny--but at the time I really did want to sleep. Linda came back upstairs and she was like, "Dave Catney, I can't believe you!"--like he was in trouble--"Get out of here!"

He just wanted to make sure that I was nearby. His condition was getting worse, and he was afraid. He didn't want to be away from either of us for very long. He knew what was going on. But Dave was very demanding. He required a LOT of attention, and didn't always give you enough room. Poor Linda had to come over and help that week. I was really starting to lose my mind because he was constantly requiring attention, and I just couldn't do it myself and I was starting to get cranky to Dave. That was the high point for me, that week. I mean, I didn't now how much more I could take. Dave had been in the hospital six or seven times. I would sit there in the hospital, changing the sheets all the time. Going to the pharmacy and getting drugs and giving him the drugs and trying to keep track of everything he was taking. That chart helped out a lot. Getting meals.. Being there for him around the clock... The pressure was very, very high.

And so when he died I think it made it even harder to take, because my whole life had been that, and when he died, that was it. There was no more. Everything I had been doing all of a sudden came to a complete stop, everything that I had been racing so hard to keep up with just to try and make it work right. Linda and I both; it was such a sudden change. Dave and I had talked about that and Linda and I had talked about it too, that that would be a very difficult aspect of Dave dying.

His last night at home he had taken a bath in the middle of the night. He had gotten up. I had this chair sitting in front of the bed facing him and I was laying in the chair and I fell asleep. I'd given him his last round of medications and they were still running. So I had fallen asleep and I woke up at around three, and Dave was walking in the bedroom with a towel; he had taken a bath. He sat down on the bed and he was having trouble breathing. I remember I was really scared because I didn't know how I was going to get him back to the hospital. The doctor had to admit him; Dave didn't have any insurance. I didn't know if I could get him there quick enough. I had no idea how bad he was. I didn't know if he could make it down to the car, and he was starting to panic because he couldn't get enough oxygen. So we called Dr. R. at home--he had just walked in the door--and he called Twelve Oaks and told them we were on our way.

We threw his clothes on and got him down to the car. I was holding him because I didn't know if he'd pass out; you just don't know what's going to happen. He wasn't getting enough oxygen, and I just needed to get the car up there and get him into it. If I got him into the car I knew it was going to be OK. So we took the elevator and went to the lobby and sat Dave on a chair and I ran and got my car real quick and drove it to the front and took him out there.

And I just kept telling him... In situations like that I let my panic stay inside as much as I could and learned to talk real softly to Dave, just real calmly, and it really helped him a lot if I could do that. I was freaking out when that happened but I was just like, "Keep breathing.... You're going to be OK...." The whole way to the hospital I said, "You're OK... You're OK... Just breathe... You'll be fine..." I think I'd called my mom and Linda and told them we were on our way to the hospital, and they were up there pretty quick.

We got in there. He was cold. They took his shirt off and set him on a stainless steel table, and it's cold and they're trying to run an EKG and all this shit, and it takes forever in the emergency room, and he's shivering and can't breathe, and they've got him on oxygen. They did some x-rays, and he had a collapsed lung; that was the problem. The truth of the matter is that the problem had already happened before he went home. What probably had happened is that he had a hole in his lung and slowly it was kind of deflating, and finally at three o'clock in the morning that Sunday or Monday it wasn't working at all. So he had only one lung, which I'm sure wasn't doing so great either because he had pneumonia.

They were going to put a tube in his chest and try and assist his breathing. It wasn't until eight-thirty or nine in the morning that Dr. B. got there and they got the tube in there, so Dave was there for about six hours and he was really impatient, and I was getting impatient, and we were all pretty worried there. Things just don't happen fast enough sometimes in the hospital, and I know that there are a lot of patients to deal with. But they got the tube in, and it didn't work. As it turned out, his lungs were perforated; there was more than one hole and they weren't just little holes. The CMV was really eating his lungs up, and essentially there wasn't too much that could help at that point. So by Wednesday they said that the tube didn't have a good seal and that's why it probably wasn't working, and they were going to take that tube out Thursday and put a new one in. Looking back on it after Dave died, they were fighting a losing battle.

I don't know why I was so surprised when he died. I think that I was just so caught up in everything. I mean I remember--looking back now--he was very sick the night before and his color was way off and he was so quiet. Wednesday night I helped him use the bathroom and got his pillows all situated and got him into bed and as comfortable as possible, and he grabbed my hand and he sat me down on the bed and he just laid his head in my lap and just laid there in silence. And he turned up and looked at me, and just the look in his eyes

I sat there on the bed and watched him sleep and I would cry, because he was just so bad off. I apparently fell asleep until the nurse woke me about five or so. It's like I heard her in my dream; I was sleeping really hard for some reason which was pretty unusual for me then. But she tried to wake me up several times. "Scott..." "Scott..." And I remember hearing her voice but it was like part of my dream. "Get up Scott. Dave's not doing well..." It's like it didn't register. She must have tried to wake me for five or ten minutes. And once I got up I had been sleeping so hard that it was one of those things like, "Where am I?" I looked up and Dave was lying on the bed. His eyes weren't open and he was breathing kind of hard and making a lot of noise when he exhaled, a taxing, labored sound. I thought maybe that it wasn't an abnormal thing to be out like that, kind of commonplace with the Dilaudid they were giving him. I went over and I tried to talk to him and wake him up and that's when I started getting scared. Because I tried to get through to him and wasn't getting anywhere; he was just, "Huhhhh Huhhhh Huhhhh"--that's what he was doing, just this monotone sound--and it was really starting to freak me out. I called my mom and Linda right away and told them to come up the hospital. Fast.

I asked the nurse what was going on. Because it's a pretty heavy duty drug, for some reason I was stuck on this Dilaudid. "How much Dilaudid has he had?" One of the nurses came in and said to me, "There's nothing that we can do..." I was OK with that and I knew that, should something happen, that Dave didn't want to be revived and all that. But I worked on him for a while, trying to get him to respond. And he did; he opened his eyes, thank God. He saw me and he held my hand, and I told him that I loved him. He told me that he loved me too. About that time my mom and Linda walked in, and I said,

"Dave, look who's here..." I'd kind of been quizzing him. One of the first things I asked him was, "When was your last Dilaudid?" And he knew; he said it was about three or three-fifteen.

Linda went to the other side of the bed and she held his hand and she said, "It's OK now. It's time to let go, Dave." She said, "Go to a safe place." It was something that she and Dave had talked about a lot in their talks as far as Dave dealing with pain. Linda had talked to him a lot about getting to a spot where you were far away from that, kind of outside your body. He was listening to her, and she said, "Go to a safe place. You don't have to fight this anymore." He told her to unplug the phone. The last thing he said was, "It's beautiful." His breathing gradually stopped.

Linda was a lot more mature about it than I was. She was really strong. I didn't want to believe it; I knew he was dying but I didn't want to believe it at the time. And then she came in and told him to let go. I just looked at her like, "You bitch, how dare you!" I didn't mean it like that--I really didn't--it was just a confirmation of what was happening. Then she and I both looked at each other and we both started crying.

It was pretty quick. They woke me up at six forty-five, and Dave died at seven fifteen. Linda and my mom got there *quick*. Dave was very, very peaceful and he was responding to her "Go to a safe place..." "It's beautiful," like he was somewhere...nice. And unplugging the phone is such a statement. That's a big thing for Dave. The phone was his life; it almost seemed like a part of his body. And to hear him say, "Unplug the phone" I mean it's kind of silly, but he was letting go.

My dad came right after that. Nobody else was there, nobody was there on the floor who was real close to Dave and I and the rest of us. The nurse that he had on night duty wasn't one of our favorites. Dawn, the head nurse during the day wasn't there. People hadn't gotten there yet. Wendy and Marianne were there except they were downstairs in a meeting. Dr. B. hadn't shown up yet; none of the doctors were on the floor. There was nobody there.

Within an hour Dr. B. was there, Wendy, Marianne, and Jane came by, and it was the talk of the hospital. I guess the first people there were my dad and Bob Baradel and Karen St. Laurent. I started calling people within a half hour after he died I guess. We called Barry pretty quick. Linda left to start getting the arrangements together, which had to be done pretty quickly.

My dad felt really bad that he had never been up to the hospital to see Dave. When he walked me out to my car later he said, "I should have been here." I said, "You are here." That was the best thing he could have done was to be there that morning, and he was. And goddam man, my parents went through a lot. They had just found out about all this stuff in April. Whatever they had thought before doesn't matter; they learned the truth in April, the fact that Dave was sick and that I was gay. And even though it was really hard for my dad he was a *good* sport, all the way. That just doesn't happen a lot. I know I'm very, very lucky.

We started cleaning his room up. Everyone kept asking if I wanted to be in there with Dave just by myself. I didn't need to be in the room by myself with him for long. We started taking all the flowers out of his room and took them down the hall to

the nurses station and just set them up there. Dave really liked those flowers. Linda went ahead and got everything arranged for the memorial service.

(CONTINUED, PART 4)