

When a family gets COVID-19

Written by By Beth Blakeman, Associate Editor Dee Velasco, Sun Correspondent
Friday, 31 July 2020 04:06



Trina Velasco has COVID-19. She is one of hundreds of thousands of people who have it. Trina Velasco is in Nevada. Her son, Dee, is in New Mexico.

Trina Velasco hasn't seen her son in weeks. But every day he sends her prayers and texts hoping to give her the strength to keep on fighting. He said he notices that as he has been texting daily, he has begun referring to her as 'Mama,' returning to the name he had for her when he was a child.

Trina hasn't seen her husband Robert since before his birthday, July 12. He isn't allowed to visit her. So he called her. But that stopped when she was put on a ventilator. Then he kept in contact using FaceTime. But that too, had to stop. Then he texted her, but now, even that form of communication has stopped.

WHAT HAPPENED

The way Dee remembered it, his mother got sick about five weeks ago, when his sister Gina, and her son Daniel came to the house coughing. Trina had trouble breathing shortly after that, and went to the hospital.

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She was placed on oxygen. Then she was admitted, monitored, and put on a ventilator for about a week. When she stabilized, she was taken off the ventilator, and placed on dialysis and positioned on her stomach to sleep. She also had a line inserted to track her blood pressure (plasmapheresis). Dee says he has gotten word that his mother's organs are not responding and are shutting down.

While all of this has been happening inside the walls of the hospital, Trina's family is grappling with an uncertain future.

On July 20, Robert received a call from his wife's doctor telling him to "Pray for the best. Expect the worst."

THE VELASCOS

Robert and Trina have been married nearly 50 years.

When Dee described his parents marriage, he told stories of Robert buying flowers for Trina – not because it was her birthday, or their anniversary or Mother's Day, but just because.

He told of the little notes his father would give his mother saying things like, "Love you, Robert," "Thinking of you," "Hope you have a good day."

Dee said as a little kid, he would ask his mom, "How come dad writes you notes?"

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"That's what you do when you love somebody," his mother answered.

At the Thanksgiving dinner table the year that Trina underwent triple-bypass surgery, Dee said he finished giving the blessing and his father said he wanted to add something.

Robert said, "God, I thank you for giving me more years to be with my wife."

"That's when I realized how much my dad really loves my mom," Dee said.

"They were planning on another trip to Hawaii for their anniversary in mid-October," Dee said. "They had been there twice already."

"I look at them as an example of how a marriage should be ... When my mom was in surgery and she had to be in a wheelchair, my dad converted the bathroom to fit her needs.

"I have never ever seen him [Robert] once complain. He opens the car door to get her out. He does the same thing to get her in. He never complains. He never moans and groans about it. He just does it," he said.

The most recent communications Dee had from his mom were texts on July 6 and 7. "She put a little heart symbol and then she text[ed] 'Hello. It is only me. I love you, Mom.'"

One day later she sent another text, "I am wholeheartedly. I am going to [be] okay. Love you all."

"I always call my Mom each week and to have no communication with her since then is unbearable and I feel like a small child looking out the window to see if she'll walk up to the door," Dee said. "As my Dad texts me of changes of my Mom, I put my finger across the phone

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screen because I don't want to see that [message].

"Some people may say "why doesn't your dad call instead? It's because I know he is in agony and turmoil. When I asked him to send me wedding pictures of them, he said he couldn't look at them because it would be too emotional. I want to hear my Mom's voice again."

Gina, who was also diagnosed with COVID-19, has quarantined herself at their parents' house. Dee was not sure if Daniel was with her.

"Even where I'm at right now in my life, I don't know how it's going to be if she doesn't make it. I always ask people how do they do it," Dee said. "I guess you've got to wait.

"I guess no matter how old you are you still look at your mom and dad as ... I guess from a little kid's point of view," he said.

"I don't know how to feel, I feel anger at my sister for not taking precautionary measures. I feel sad and worried for my father because he misses my Mom so much and not being able to see him is agonizing.

"I wonder how and when it will hit me, will I be ok, because I'm talking and looking at my Dad as the pillar of our family. I know it's a part of life that we all will die, but to have my Mom die this way is just not right and for my Dad to not be there by her side is robbing him of that, which he will never ever get back.

"I truly believe my Dad would not even think twice about seeing her despite the chance of him getting the virus, because he loves her that much that it wouldn't matter.

"As I'm writing this I [am] trying to hold back the tears because it's so unreal and I hate it, I want to see my Mom and hold her hand one more time and pray with her, so I can know she will be in heaven. My hope is in Jesus Christ.

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“I’m not ready to let go.”

As this story was being put together, Trina Velasco passed away on Wednesday, July 22 at 2:10 pm.