



THE ONE “THING” THAT CHANGED THE REST OF MY LIFE

By: Sabrina Winters, Attorney at Law

Good and bad “things” happens every day to every one of us. These “things” are what make us who we are. How we allow the “things” to affect our lives is what our life ultimately becomes. Zio Giovanni’s death is my “thing” that changed the rest of my life.

He had a great sense of humor and a lackadaisical attitude about life. The kids in the neighborhood called him the Candy Man because every time he came to visit he would have a trunk full of candy to pass out to all of us!

He’d show up unannounced for dinner often and my mother (being a great Italian mom ☺) always had enough for him (and an army I might add!). He never forgot a birthday...never!!! Without fail there would be money taped to the inside of our envelopes with a “self portrait” silly picture he would draw of himself.

Visiting him at his office was always fun; he would let me and my brother play on his drafting table and sit at the receptionist desk and pretend to be working. As kids, of course, that was great because we were being allowed to do something “bad”!

15720 John J. Delaney Drive, Suite 300, Charlotte, North Carolina 28277

(704) 843-1446

swinters@sabrinawinterslaw.com * www.ncestateplanninginfo.com

Zio Giovanni was happy to a fault. Nothing ever concerned him; nothing ever had a sense of urgency for him. Life was life and it was what it was going to be. He was a happy man right up until he took his last breath. I know because I was there. ***My uncle's death changed my life.***

He never thought he would die. And if he did, he'd say then "oh well". I realize, that it was his choice to take his chances and none of us had to like it.

But, I often do think about if he had to do it over again, would he? Would it make a difference to him knowing how emotionally drained my father was after he died? What if he knew the pain my father endured having to watch him be resuscitated 5 times in one day, would that change anything? Or would it change matters if he understood truly the heartache Dad felt when he had to call my aunt and cousins to tell them that the end was near and there wasn't anything he could do to make the pain end sooner for him? Would he have done anything different if he knew the heartbreak his family would suffer not being able to help him with his pain?

It was painful not to have my father home at nights because he would stay at the hospital until they kicked him out. It was gut wrenching to see my father watch his brother die in front of his eyes and wonder what my uncle was thinking as he saw us all by his bedside. If he hadn't had Alzheimer's when he died, would he have made different choices? Was he proud of the funeral and service we had for him or was he up in Heaven laughing at all of us because we were all so emotional? Did we do what he wanted?

No family should ever have to live with the burden of having to make the decisions my father had to make. No loved one should bare the pain of watching a family member die when there are so many alternate ways in which to manage their end of life. And, the unanswerable question of carrying with you for the rest of your life "Did we make the right decisions."

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