

Len's Death

In 1998 my husband Len and I came to Bali for the very first time.

Len had a history of heart problems but he had seen his specialist the day before we left Australia and got the "all clear".

We stayed one night in a hotel in Kuta and then checked out to be picked up by the P & O cruise staff to go aboard a small cruise ship to explore Lombok, Komodo, Sumba & Sumbawa for 7 days.

We were greeted on the wharf at Benoa by the Balinese staff and they gave us a welcome cocktail and an orchid behind our ear.

They escorted us up the gangway and to the check-in desk.

As they asked our name, Len put his drink on the table and said "Darling, I've dropped my orchid" and then he died.

He had had a massive heart attack and was dead within seconds but the wonderful Balinese took him straight to the on board hospital and tried to resuscitate him for an hour.

Finally coming to tell me they could not do anymore.

The General Manager of the Cruise Line came aboard and asked what my wishes were and how could he & his staff help me.

I was obviously in shock and not thinking straight.

He arranged a hotel for me, made sure I had access to a phone (this is before general mobile use).

He arranged a funeral director; for Len's body to go the morgue; for transport for me; for a member of the Australian consulate to come to me to help; he stayed with me through all of this.

I was completely unfamiliar with Balinese funeral arrangements and thought I should take Len's body back to Australia so his adult children and grandchildren could view the body before cremation in Australia.

Little did I know that the body was left outside the morgue in a van for many hours before being transferred to the "un-airconditioned" morgue. Things have changed since then.

The general manager took me to dinner at La Lucciola (one of Bali's best restaurants) and arranged for Len's casket to be put on the plane that night and for me to accompany it to Australia. He took me to the airport and checked me in and arranged for me to go to the first class lounge and be upgraded on the flight.

I knew no one in Bali and obviously didn't speak the language and I am forever grateful to the general manager of the cruise line. His name is Jack Daniels and I can say that "Jack Daniels got me through it".

I arrived back in Australia and was able to have Len's funeral because he was being treated by doctors and it wasn't a suspicious death.

You need a cremation certificate from your doctor and a death certificate.

I had a certificate in English written by the ship's doctor but it wasn't a proper Death Certificate and almost no-one in Australia accepted it.

I was not aware that the proper Indonesian death Certificate was issued sometime after the death and the funeral director in Bali didn't send it to me and of course, I didn't ask for it because I didn't know I should.

Len's car was due for registration the next week and they wouldn't let me change the names without reading the will—it was devastating.

I couldn't claim life insurance for his kids. I couldn't probate his will or access his bank accounts. Luckily I had my own accounts to rely on.

It took me 2 years before I could get an acceptable Death Certificate.

There is an Australian government entity that issues death certificates for Australian deaths abroad and once you find them, they are very helpful.

We had travel insurance but they refused any claim. The death costs in Bali and the transfer flight back to Australia, cost around AUD \$10,000.

We had been married for more than 20 years and I was 45 years old and alone and grieving and not having the correct paperwork just prolonged the agony.

Sharyn Machin