

Double Toll in Albany Fire Tragedy

An Albany woman who suffered a massive heart attack hours after learning that her husband was killed in a fire has died.

Elizabeth Jagers died Sunday at Albany Medical Center, where she had been on life support, Albany police confirmed. She was stricken early Saturday at a neighbor's home, where she was sleeping on the couch.

Her husband, Ronald Jagers, died Friday, along with the couple's beloved greyhound, Dancing Freddie, at their home on Pitch Pine Road.

The Jagers did not have family in the area, and police had difficulty tracking down any relatives. The case is a strong reminder of the importance of naming a power of attorney that includes more than one person, said a Tully Rinckey PLLC attorney who specializes in estate planning. He said everyone should have a living will and a health care proxy. "It's important to plan ahead on things," he said.

He said it takes time and a lot of expense to establish a power of attorney for someone already in the hospital. He said hospitals do have the power to end life support if no relatives can be found.

On Tuesday, co-workers at the state comptroller's office said they came back to work after the long weekend to find Elizabeth Jagers' desk as she had left it on Friday. They had no idea if their colleague was still alive, and didn't know who to call for information. They contacted a reporter in hopes of locating their friend. A police detective called later in the day to tell them she wouldn't be coming back.

Jagers abruptly left her job as an auditor on Friday afternoon after a neighbor called to report the fire. She later told her neighbor, Theresa Portelli, that she drove home thinking she would find a small kitchen fire, but instead found her street clogged with firefighting equipment.

The cause of the fire is still under investigation, Fire Chief Robert Forezzi said. He said the blaze originated in the room in which Ronald Jagers died and that it burned for some time before it was discovered.

Neighbors who called in the fire said it was hard to tell that the house was burning when just standing in front of it.

It was two days before Ronald Jagers' 66th birthday, and the couple were soon to celebrate their 43rd wedding anniversary. They had been together since they were students at the University of Tennessee and were ardent followers of politics who loved to watch CSPAN together.