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'If there was a good way to go, this was it': Portland native chose his fate under new law

Ronald Deprez, who was 75 and living with a degenerative illness, became one of the first to end his life under Maine's Death With Dignity Act.

BY **ERIC RUSSELL** STAFF WRITER



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Esmé Deprez and her father, Ronald Deprez, in a restaurant in Cairo in 2017. *Photo courtesy of Esmé Deprez*

Ronald Deprez had no interest in drawing out his last months after he was diagnosed with a degenerative neuromuscular disorder for which there is no cure.

His life, which had been full, rich and, above all, active, was radically changed and he knew it would never go back. He'd earned the right to end it on his terms, his daughter said.

So, Deprez spent his final days at the home he built in Deer Isle, overlooking Penobscot Bay. He read Wordsworth poems and listened to Leonard Cohen. He looked at pictures and shared stories with his two grown children, Esmé and Réal, and his son-in-law, Alex, and 13-month-old granddaughter, Fern. They drank shots of Irish whiskey, Redbreast 15-year.

And then, when he decided it was time, he took the medications that would stop his heart.

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