

Fred August's widow wants Bay of Plenty to 'celebrate life' in lockdown on anniversary

By [Samantha Olley](#) - Bay of Plenty Times



Steffi August's late husband Fred died in a truck crash on April 11, 2019. Photo / File

It's been "a bloody hard" year for Steffi August.

On April 11 last year she lost her "one-in-a-million" husband Fred, who died aged 58, in a truck crash near Tokoroa.

His smile, humour, hugs and kisses and "magic love" were gone in seconds when his truck and another large truck collided on State Highway 1.

When she spoke to the Bay of Plenty Times this week, Steffi put the phone on speaker so Fred could listen to the interview too.

She had planned to mark his death with other bereaved men and women from the Bay of Plenty community - a place Steffi calls "paradise" - with a walk up Mount Maunganui.

They were going to celebrate their loved ones lost by blowing bubbles: "just to say 'hello, we are here and that we are thinking about them'".

Covid-19's isolation measures have made living without Fred "extra challenging" for Steffi and they also disrupted her memorial plans.

The Mauao track has been closed and groups of people from different households cannot group in close quarters during the current pandemic response, so Steffi came up with an online solution to mark the memorial via video conferencing.

"I am using the technology to invite some close friends so we can have a drink all together. It's not just me in my house by myself. It's like they're with you in the room ... Everybody can say something as well, something nice about Fred, how they remember him."

His funeral brought 450 mourners together last year.



Steffi August at home in Mount Maunganui. Photo / File

Steffi said anyone was welcome to join her this Saturday online at 3.55pm when he was fatally injured a year ago.

To deal with loneliness without Fred, Steffi talks to him out loud in her house despite knowing there will not be a reply.

"Everybody copes in a different way ... This has really helped me. I've got photos everywhere - everywhere in the house ... So he actually is in my life. I believe he is around me."

She cries "a lot" but it helps.

"It has to come out, you can't bottle it. That's the danger because one day you will snap. It has to come out, we have to cry and we are allowed to cry."

She said the support from family, friends and the wider community in the past year had been "amazing".

"It's a pleasure to live here. Really, it is an honour."

Despite the community suffering Covid-19 has caused, Steffi sees positives.

"Something had to happen because we all didn't really live any more. Somebody pulled the handbrake to say 'stop, hold on a minute - there is life'. Now neighbours talk to each other. They never talked to each other."

In her opinion, the lockdown will make New Zealanders stronger and she hopes they will take the time "celebrate life".

"I want everybody to follow all rules imposed on us in order to save lives. Treasure your relationship, make memories every day and never ever miss a date night. Be creative, see the light at the end of the tunnel. Use those new challenges as opportunities for a better and healthier life."

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