

## **The Death Of my Mom and Dad**

I am writing this for several reasons.

- Because I am afraid that there will come a day when I will NOT remember my Mother and Father as well as I do now.
- Because I don't have any brother and sisters to pass on the following to others when I leave this earth.
- Because I want to leave this information for my daughters and wife to remember
- Because while I was at my mothers bedside while she was dying in the hospital, a woman told me I should "write". (I asked her what she meant by that, and she wasn't sure)

### **My Father:**

My father's name is James Edward Lewis. I always looked up to my dad.....First of all, because he was 6'3" tall, but mostly because he was a very honest hard working man.

When he was a kid, he loved to read. His brothers and sisters called him the bookworm. He lived in West Bridgewater, and the house he lived in had no running water, no indoor plumbing, and only gaslights. It was a very simple/humble upbringing.

My father had two brothers and one sister. His oldest brother was Joe. Joe was a very interesting man, and I could spend many pages writing about him. (I might do that some day, but not right now) He was a Merchant Marine, and pretty much lived his entire life as a seaman. He was a pretty rugged old salt of the earth, and a very honest and kind man. His big fault in life was that he was an alcoholic. He used to come to our house "between ships" and our whole family would have a good time. My Mom liked Joe, and even though he would get drunk, pass out, and drop lit cigarettes on the floor, she always welcomed him in when some of his other relatives had "kicked him out".

My dad had an older sister, my Aunt Gertrude. She was a very kind woman, who had two kids. I remember going over her house many times. She lived in Brockton most of here life. She was a big woman (like me), but very kind. She always seemed to me to be sort of quiet...but that might have been because Joe and my father could really get loud.

My dad has a younger brother named Donald. He was a builder, and my dad worked for him from time to time in the early years. (To make some extra money) My Uncle Donald built the first house my family bought. (We only owned two houses...the first in Canton from 1963-1966, and the second in Stoughton from 1978? to July 31, 1996)

My dad loved his brothers and sisters. My dad took the death of my Uncle Joe and Aunt Gert very hard. Actually, I believe that now that my Uncle Donald is the last surviving Lewis (of his generation) that he is worrying about his own life.

My father was in the Army and Navy for quite a few years. As I recall, he was in the Army for 4 years and the Navy for about 13 years. He was stationed in Germany in the army, and on a number of ships in the Navy. He always commented that his tour on the Aircraft Carrier Forestal was his favorite. It was a "floating city".

My dad was a machinist in the service, and when he came out. He had gone into the service before getting his High School Diploma, but when he came out of the service he got his high school equivalency test and went to college nights. He went to Boston University at night, while working as a machinist on the side. My mom went to work to send him through school and to support the family.

My dad graduated with a BS in Physics and Math. He really was a smart guy, and I believe that I will never have the mental capacity that he had. He knew a lot about many areas. Building, Finish Carpentry, Machinist work, Physics, Math, Electronics, Ham Radio, German, Portuguese, English Language, The bible/religion, History, Baseball, playing guitar/banjo/mandolin, Automotive repair (he was in the motor pool in the army).

He was a very "handy" fellow, and he would tackle any task. He would sit down and learn about it, and then he would devise a plan of attack. He knew his limits, and planned accordingly.

In Lubec Maine, at a house that he was "re-building", he had the task of replacing the roof. He wasn't too thrilled with heights, so he actually resingled the roof "from the inside"! He had to replace the roofing boards anyway, so he built up staging in the inside of the roof, and he took off all the roofing wood. As he replaced boards (going up), he would put down tarpaper and rows of shingles. He kept building the staging up until he got to the roof ridge.... At that point the people of the town who had been marveling at what he had done (in a very short amount of time as well) thought he was trapped! They thought he "HAD" to come up on the roof and finish that last few rows from the outside! But...NO...He built a "widows watch" platform on the top center of the roof, and finished the job from that platform. He then built this platform into a railed in platform where he placed a couple of seats and where he and my mother could sit and have a stunning view of the Bay of Fundy.

Because of a Jeep accident in the army, and a back operation to remove a slipped disk, my dad had a sort of weak back, but that never stopped him. If he had something he had to lift or pull into position, he would use his knowledge of mechanics and Physics and build some sort of lever, wedge or pulley system to get

the mechanical advantage to his side. I always worried about him hurting his back, but he never really did. He was very smart, and knew his limits.

In the early years I remember that my dad was always either working, studying, or going to school. He was always busy; trying to make ends meet.

He often said to me that our best years (for the family) were back in the late 60's. He used to say that you could judge how well you are doing on how much steak you can afford to eat. I remember back in the late 60's, we ate Porterhouse steak all the time. I remember in the 80's that we could not afford steak, and certainly not Porterhouse. Hamburger had moved into our diet. (Although we ground it ourselves from cheap pieces of meat)

Our family wasn't dirt poor by any stretch of the imagination. We were easily lower middle class. Except for the houses we owned in 1963-1966 (my uncle built), the time between that house and 1978 when we bought the house in Stoughton, we could NOT afford to buy a house.

Both my parents worked, but I remember my mom and dad going without things in order to get me a pair of shoes, or school clothes. My parents never believed in "buying on credit", and were actually very good at saving.

One story that ALWAYS come to mind when I think of my dad was one time that he and I were practicing throwing the baseball in the back yard at 2207 Washington Street (Canton). He and I would often throw the ball back and forth, as I was in little league and he loved baseball.

Well, I used to throw the ball progressively faster and faster as I warmed up, and this one throw I threw a little high, and very hard. It wasn't really that high, but at about neck level to my dad, but it skimmed off the top of his glove and hit him in the eye. I instantly felt terrible. I had broken his glasses, and his broken glasses had put a nasty gash just over and to the right of his left eye. He was bleeding a lot, and I was really scared.

He didn't get excited, went inside, applied pressure, and all was better. I don't know why that incident is so clear in my mind, but it always comes up when I think about him.

The other obvious thing that comes to mind about my dad was his quick study of the Amateur Radio license exams. He started off by getting a no-code license, and within a little over a year had gotten proficient at Morse code so that he passed ALL the tests and received EVERY HAM license there was to get.....His last Morse code test was over 35 words per minute!

With all this knowledge, he had not transmitted too many times. Sure, he had spoken to people voice, but I don't think he ever transmitted a single Morse code

sentence. I actually thought about this fantastic accomplishment at the time of my father's death. I did for a couple of reasons. First, it was fresh in my mind; He had just recently passed his latest FCC test...some sort of commercial license test. It was just a couple of months earlier that we both had gone to a ham flea market and he had passed another two tests.... And even more that that, I had started to set out and learn with him when he started, and he quickly left me in the dust.

Now, granted, he was retired and I had a full time job, but he had flown through ALL the exams (only failing to pass 1 or 2 times) and I never got my first license. (The no code technician)

My dad was a smart guy...no doubt about it. My mom and I were very proud of all his accomplishments...and after he died, she always brought up his quickly passing "so many Ham license exams".

Dad was more than just "book learned". He was a very hands-on guy. He liked to apply his learning.

He did this all the time with his house, or car. He built alot of things himself, from finishing the rooms in the basement (kitchen, bathroom) to building two buildings outside the house in Stoughton. (One is an 8x8 shed, and the second is a very large machine shop.)

I remember that my dad and another Wentworth instructor built a solar hot water heater during the energy crisis. They had developed a special course on "Energy". The solar hot water heater and they made it on the nightly news one night, and I remember my mom and I watching it.... All excited to see dad on TV.

I love my dad, and know that he would have done anything for me. He was a great example of an honest, hard working person.

Sure, he wasn't perfect...no one is. He was an alcoholic, and would get drunk alot. It would worry my mother, and when he got drunk he would yell and scream. Even with all of that, my mom and day stayed together. My mother always reminded me that we are all human, and that means we all have our faults. She could see past the drunk to see the hard working and honest guy. She would get mad with him, and they would fight.... But she always told me how good he was, and that I need to respect him because he was a good man.

My dad was always there to teach me. He was always there to give me a hand. He was always proud of my accomplishments. (Whether I was young or old) He wasn't perfect, but none of us are.

Some people cry because they never say, "I love you" to their dad. I think I did, but I still cry worrying that I might not have said it enough. It was so easy to take my dad for granted. He never really searched for attention. He was the quiet type

who was happy with himself for just getting the job done. I hope he realized how proud I was of him, how much of a model he was to me, and how proud I am of everything he did.

My dad died very suddenly. I never expected it. My mom didn't either.

### **My Mother:**

Just like my dad, I have fantastic memories of my mom. She and my dad were actually great teachers. She and my dad would tell me about something, and then leave me with an example that I would remember. Over the years, that example would be brought up over and over. It would be a "real-life" example that I would always remember, and one that would always help reinforce a lesson.

One of these stories was the story of my mother and her brother Jimmy walking down the street. My mother had a hat on, and I think she might have added some flowers or some such trimmings to an old hat to make it brighter and new.... Anyway, by Uncle Jimmy and my mother were walking to mass, and Uncle Jimmy was laughing and taunting my mom. Mom was pretty upset, because this was her older brother laughing at her new hat. Well, several minutes into the taunting and laughing as my uncle was looking up to the sky and laughing, a bird apparently flew by and dropped a turd down onto his lower lip. My uncle immediately stopped carrying on, and my mom then began to laugh hysterically. "God had gotten back at him for poking fun".

This story was repeated for all sorts of lessons.... From "you must be humble", to "he who laughs last laughs best".

Like I said, she taught by example and story, and it really works!

I forgot to introduce my mom's brothers and sisters. She had two brothers, and one sister. Her sister died at a very young age. I forget her name, but she was very young. My mom had a Brother Jimmy that I talked about above. He was a great guy who did allot with me and his son, my Cousin Jimmy. (I always wanted to have the make Jim because of all of the many Jims around me...my day, my uncle, my cousin, and some of my second cousins if I remember correctly.....As a result I took the name "James" as my confirmation name) My Uncle Jimmy took me on several of his trips to Canada, and I later went with my Cousin Jimmy to Rome Italy with his high school class trip.

One of the things that (for some reason) sticks in my mind was that my Uncle Jimmy's car had these flip up ashtray covers....and on the trips in his car, I remember that I would drive him nuts by flipping these covers up, and letting the spring snap them down. I just could NOT stop doing it, and it drove him nuts! (I don't know why that memory is so vivid in my memory)

My mother also had a brother Tony. Tony was a very handy guy, and he used to make allot of stuff out of wood. We have a manger that he made. There is also a doorknocker that looks like a woodpecker. (Last I knew my mom still had that, although I didn't find it while packing her house) My Uncle Tony married an older woman. (As I recall) She used to sort of abuse him, but he loved her and no one understood why. (This is not very clear in my mind)

My Uncle Tony died in a car accident on Dedham road in Canton. (My grandparents had a farm on Dedham road) His car was hit head on, and was thrown up sort if into a tree, He was killed instantly. The fellow who reported the crash was a truck driver who drove up to their house to report it. When they saw the accident, they always wondered if the man who reported the accident might have been the guy who hit my Uncle Tony. They never got the mans name as he went off quickly.

I never knew my Grandfather, but I did know my Grandmother Profirio. She lived until I was about 4 years old. I remember her as a very gentle woman who really loved me to death. Believe it or not I was not a good eater, and my grandmother would line up about 4-5 stuffed animals and tell them that she would hit them (with a small red wooden stick that I think I still have in my underwear drawer) if they tried to eat my food....that food was for Quentin! I would eat up at that point.

My grandmother died of a burst blood vessel in her brain. My mother found her on the kitchen floor of her apartment. My mother said the apartment smelled like roses, and she knew she had gone to heaven. Everyone loved my grandmother, and always told me about her. I only wish that I could follow their example.

My mother told me many stories about here growing up, and her family life. I understand that my grandfather owned a shipping company in Portugal. He was pretty well off, but when he moved to the USA, he lost everything in the depression. He was not bitter, and he loved his freedom here. Although he had lived the good life in Portugal, being a poor immigrant in the USA, he had to work all kinds of jobs. He shoveled out barns; he did all sorts of stuff to keep his family fed.

My mother told me about a strongbox that he had come to America with that had been filled with valuable coins. All that was gone after the depression. He was poor, but still proud. He wasn't a very big man, but he was strong, and always proud. I am not sure at what age he died, and what of. I wish I had known him.

My mother told me a number of family stories. One of them was the time that the family went to New York to pick-up my Cousin Anna who was an orphan from Portugal. Well, my grandfather had never really been to a big city like New York, and so his heart was going a mile a minute. When he got to the hotel, and he found out he was to sleep on the 7th floor, he was ready to go back home. He just didn't

want to be that far off the ground...he was worried about fire. He stayed up all-night and looked out the window...frightened of a fire!

My Uncle Tony or Jimmy (I forget who) used to sleepwalk. So my grandmother put him on the inside of the bed. (The two boys used to share the same bed) Well the sleepwalking uncle woke up in the middle of the night, and got on his knees. My grandmother had a picture of Jesus hung over the bed, and this uncle, on his knees was staring into the picture, thinking it was a window. He was yelling at the picture, thinking it was a friend outside "I'll be right out, I have to get dressed". My other uncle woke up and was scared to death, and ran in for my grandmother. Needless to say, it was a story that was told over and over again.

At about the time that my mom found my Grandmother dead, she had had a number of deaths in the family. This was probably the lowest point for my mother, and she almost had a nervous breakdown. It affected her so much that she had to stop working at Mass General because the death and pain of the patients was getting to her.

Just like my dad, my mom was a great person, and parent. I remember my mother, my cousin Jimmy and I used to do things together in the summer. For one thing, we used to climb up Blue Hills. I remember one time in particular when we were coming down and were at a particularly steep part, my mom came down on her backside....sliding and bouncing all the way on her backside! My cousin and I laughed, and my mother had a good chuckle too!

One other time I remember pretty well. My mother, cousin and I used to walk to Houtons Pond in Canton. On one of our walks, my cousin wore thongs on his feet. Halfway there, the thongs had worn a pretty good-sized blister into his foot. When he took them off, he couldn't walk on the hot pavement and sharp rocks....so we three struggled to get back to the house.....the story of the thongs. (Actually...I don't remember if it was Jimmy or I that had the problem with the Thongs)

My mom loves Jesus Christ, and she is a devoted Christian. It isn't something that came late in life. My grandmother and their family in general were devoted Christians. My Uncle and Cousin Jimmy were very religious, and I often felt like an outcast.

Not that anyone made anything out of it, but I always felt like I hadn't listened in my CCD classes quite well enough. In fact, if the truth be known, I had/have a pretty good inferiority complex. When I was a kid, I thought I was retarded. (Who knows, maybe I was) I used to feel slow.....Eventually, I started to get better grades, and felt a little better about myself.

While I KNOW I learned a lot at Wentworth....and I know I have gone a LONG way with my Wentworth Education, I used to wonder if I would have hacked it at

a tougher school. I'm not sure, but then I really don't think I could have done much better than I have...it has been due to some luck, and some hard work.

My parents always told me (and showed me) that hard honest work was not only good for the soul, but would get you ahead. While I don't think that this is really the way to get ahead (quickly) in this world, I think the other options are either illegal or immoral, and I don't want anything to do with them.

My mother and father always told me to be humble. They always let me know that I should feel proud of my accomplishments, but not to gloat over them or rub them into other people's faces to make them feel bad, or to make myself feel better than them. "Work hard, be honest, and be humble".

I have tried to follow this recommendation, and I hope I can continue to remember and follow these words. I pray that I can pass half as many valuable lessons on to Kimberly and Kristen as were taught to me.

### **My Dad's Death:**

I remember being at work and answering the phone. Cheryl, my wife was on the other end. She sounded alarmed and nervous and she asked me if I was ready for some bad news. I told her I was, but wasn't really ready for the news she was about to tell me. She told me my mother had called her and that my mother had found my father dead on the couch, laying down watching TV.

I remember that I was shocked. I think I was calm, but I just couldn't believe it. My father seemed to be in such good shape. He was riding his bike, eating low salt stuff...he seemed a little short of breath from time to time, but he was a past smoker, and actually seemed to be getting his breath back.

I remember that date was May 1st, 1995, but I don't remember the day. I think I remember running out of work and jumping into my car. I might have mentioned to someone that I was going to see my mother because my father had died, but I know it wasn't any kind of a discussion. Just a sentence or two at most.

I got to my mother's house, and it's all sort of a blank to me now. All I remember was my mother describing what happened. She had made him something to eat and he had eaten. He lay down, and turned in the TV. He was slightly hard of hearing, so the TV was up pretty loud. My mother went into the bedroom to watch something else on the TV in there, and perhaps a couple of hours later, she came out to see him lying uncomfortably on the couch. His glasses were crooked and falling off as if he was sleeping, but his eyes were wide open. He didn't look uncomfortable, except that he surely would have been in pain from the glasses pushing on his head.

She said his hand was crossed over his stomach, and that his skin was blotchy. I guess she didn't realize what had happened and she called his name. She thought



he hadn't heard her because of the volume of the TV, so she lowered it and called again. He lay there motionless, and she began to remember what it was like when she found her mother. She checked his breathing, and found none. She told me that she prayed for him, and tried to keep her cool. My mother was a very cool cucumber, but I could tell that this really shook her up badly.....Even re-telling it to me when she did.

My mother called the ambulance and waited patiently. After they came and pronounced him dead, she called Cheryl and Cheryl relayed the message to me. I believe that some of my mother's friends had some over to help her. As I said...I don't remember the day very well. I think I was in shock

I can remember the wake and funeral pretty well. I know that I was very sad, and that I just could not believe he was gone.

For some strange reason I thought a lot of my late Uncle Joe. I know my father and mother loved him, and he always seemed like the black sheep of the family. My parents always took him in, and he was a great guy once you got to know him and got past the fact that he was an alcoholic.

Actually.....This is one lesson I certainly learned from my parents....both because of their problems/shortcomings, and because they drilled it into my head. The lesson is that no one is perfect, and that you should not judge a person as only god is the judge. I have to try and look past a persons bad traits and look for the good. Yes, I know, I'm not perfect, and I certainly have had my share of cases where I judged people, or didn't give them a fair shake.....but I know that my mom and dad's words are always there to help me TRY.

At the time of my father's death, I also remember thinking about all the accomplishment he had had in his life. From being in the service, to going to school, to teaching high school, then college, and rebuilding a house in Maine, then getting into computers and then Ham radio, and then building a mechanical shop outside in the shed he built.....I thought about my own experience and accomplishment and realized how great my dad really was. I felt so bad that I had never realized it, or told him I was proud of what he had done. I know most people regret not having said "I love you", but I think I had said that...but I also thought I had taken him for granted and not made him KNOW how proud I was of him.

I'm sure he is looking down and knows NOW.

As I sit here, I think about some of the physics lab experiments that he ran. I don't know what brings these things to mind. For some reason I remember the air table, and spring experiments. I remember Ken Fahey, and Lab manager at Wentworth. I don't know why any of these things are coming to mind, but there they are.

I remember the cemetery looked so orderly and clean, and that the woman who met us at the car was very spit polished, and official. She seemed so "efficient". I knew my dad would have liked this place. Not that I liked it, but if he had to be buried somewhere, this was a nice place.

I remember going into the main building and seeing a picture of President Clinton and commenting to Cheryl that my dad wouldn't be happy to see that here. Dad never liked President Clinton. I actually don't know anyone who respects him for his dodging the draft, "not inhaling", and for his infidelity.

I notice that I have not written much about my Mom when talking about my dad's death. I'm not sure why. I know I was with her a lot, and we talked to each other about it a lot, but I think I didn't do enough to help her. I know I had thoughts about getting my mom to come up to our house for the summer, but I never followed through. I had even had thoughts about having my mother move up with us permanently, but again, I never followed through. I feel as though I had failed my mother. I don't know if any of that would have allowed me to see her condition sooner and if it did, whether that would have allowed us to "catch" the cancer soon enough to allow for a successful treatment.....no one will ever know. I know I think about that every now and then, and the only thing I can tell myself is that when God calls us to come up, there is nothing a human can do.

I would give up everything to have my mom and dad back alive.

### **My Mom's Death:**

Again....I was at work, but I remember that it was a Friday. Dec. 15th, 1995) I received a call from Cheryl that she had just spoken to her mother who had visited my mom. Cheryl's mom told Cheryl that she was worried about my mother because she could not get out of bed, and had trouble walking. I was nervous, and rushed down to my mom's house, but I had no thoughts in my head that she was going to die. I thought she might simply be sick, and as my mother often did, just went to bed to get her rest.

Even after working at a hospital, she never went to see a doctor since my birth. Never an appointment, never a shot, never a pill. I was amazed when she told me this a few weeks later when she was in the hospital.

So I arrived at my mom's house, and found her lying in bed. She seemed very tired, and I noticed that she was just lying there with the TV sound turned up loud. She wasn't really watching it, just sort of listening to it. She didn't seem totally alert, and I asked her how she felt.

She said she felt fine, that she just had a bad cold and that she was going to lay down and get better. She said she was very dizzy from time to time, and she had trouble walking because of it. After a while she rolled over and got up...very

slowly and deliberately. She had to hang on to the wall in order to keep her balance, but she slowly made her way down the hall.

I don't remember how long we talked about this, but I think Cheryl's mom came over at some point. I remember that we convinced my mother to take a trip to the hospital and get it checked out. She didn't complain and pretty much just went with us.

At the emergency room, she met a Dr. Smith....a white haired man. He was nice, but I remember that I didn't get into the back room until he had finished examining her. He had found a very high blood pressure and assumed that to be the problem. They didn't do a CAT scan because my mom kept telling him "I don't know why they brought me in here, I feel fine". He just thought she always acted/spoke as she was and didn't think anything of it. To me she was disoriented and at times not making sense. He didn't know what she was normally like, and by the time I got in there, his mind was made up.... It was high blood pressure induced dizziness.

We went home, and I went out to get the medication. I picked up an index finger blood pressure cuff. I noticed that when my mother tried to use it, she had a lot of trouble with hand to eye coordination. I had already worried that her speech was slurred a bit, and that she didn't seem all that attentive at times. She even seemed glassy eyed every now and then.

She took her medicine, and according to the blood pressure cuff, the pressure came right down...but her condition didn't get any better. In fact, I had asked her the next night (Saturday) to go back to the hospital, but she refused. I told Judy Goldberg about my mom's condition, and asked her to suggest a trip back to the hospital, and mom refused. At one point I seemed to have convinced her to come, and called the ambulance. Judy Goldberg's son who is an EMT came in and mom refused to go. He asked her who the Vice President of the USA was, and what day it was and she answered correctly.....She wasn't disoriented when he asked her, but no less than 5 minutes later, she couldn't answer the same questions. I felt helpless, because I knew she had to go to the hospital, but I couldn't force her to go....and I didn't want to force her either.

On that Saturday, my mom would sit at the table and we would talk. She often stared forward sort of blank faced, and it scared me. But the thing that scared me the most was that for most of her time from that Friday, she never mentioned the name of Jesus Christ, or spoke of the bible. This was VERY unusual for my mom, and I remember that it scared me.

As we sat at the table, we talked about how long she wasn't feeling good. She admitted that it was about a month, and that even at Thanksgiving, when we all went over Cheryl's mother's house, my mom didn't feel great. I started to think back, and remember my mom acting a little quiet that day. She never had started a conversation, and only spoke when spoken to. She had been "parroting" back

things said to her, and this was not normal....but again, it wasn't real bad, and she simply seemed like she might have had a cold.

Cheryl also remembered that my mom had a little trouble getting her foot into the Windstar van to climb up. It was almost like she could not raise her leg very high. I remember that mom complained that the step on the Windstar was higher than the one on the old Aerostar van, and I remember saying that it was really lower, but that it might just be in a different position. (Or something like that) But I didn't think much about it.

The other strange thing that happened was that my mom had made a Custard pie, but had left wax paper on the bottom of the pie. She was a good cook, and again, I didn't think anything of it...but I should have put 2 and 2 together.

Anyway, on Saturday while we were talking, mom admitted that she had not gotten out of bed for over a week. She admitted that she had called her friends who took her to church every day and told them she was busy or sleepy. She never told anyone she was sick.

I had even been in the routine of calling here every couple of days, and I then remembered that several times when I called, my mother would be very short. Sometimes she would say that she had been sleeping, and I felt bad and got off quickly. Other times, she seemed as if she didn't want to talk to me. There was actually a time when she called me at work and after two short sentences said "You must be busy there, I'll call you later". I started to put all of this together....none of these pieces had come together before, and I felt stupid for not seeing this.

Then, on Saturday at some point, my mother walked into the bathroom (holding onto the wall). She was in there for about 10 minutes when I called in to check on her. She didn't answer and so I went in. She was sitting on the floor trying to pull herself up. She had apparently lost strength in her legs and slid to the floor. She wasn't hurt, but didn't have the strength to pick herself up. She didn't want to call for me because as she said later, she "didn't want to bother anyone". I helped her up, but after I picked her up she said she was OK, but I noted that she hadn't yet straightened her left leg out...and that it was collapsing under her. She kept telling me it was straight, but I saw that it wasn't near straight. We hobbled out of the bathroom, and I held her up and helped her back to the bedroom. I was really nervous and called Judy Goldberg. No one could convince her to go back to the hospital.

Finally on Sunday, I think Cheryl's mother came over and we finally convinced mom to go to the hospital. When we got there I waited a bit, but then went into the Emergency room so that she would not convince the doctor that she was fine. Dr. Smith was in there again on Sunday, and he was surprised to see mom. Again she told him how she was fine, and that she didn't know why she was there. He started

to look upset with me, but I told him the story about her falling in the bathroom, and he asked mom about it. She admitted that it happened but said it was nothing. Dr. Smith wasn't concerned, but now believed me enough to order up more tests. He told my mom that she was going to have a cat scan, but that she would be out of there in a few minutes.

Mom went, and came back within a half of an hour or so, but when Dr. Smith came back he looked worried. He told us that the first CAT scan had been messed up and that she was going to have to have other one. In the mean time, a woman who was having a heart attack was wheeled in. The poor woman was in a lot of pain, and the doctors seemed to be working at half speed. Actually, they were probably working as quickly as a team could be expected to work given that they didn't know what they were dealing with. It was hard for my mom and I to listen to what was going on behind the curtain, but mom was soon called for her next CAT scan. Another 25 minutes later mom came back and Dr. Smith pulled me aside. He told me that her CAT scan was very abnormal, and that he was going to admit her. He said that he was very sorry for letting her go the night before without giving her a cat scan, but with her telling him she felt fine, he thought it was just the very high blood pressure. I told him not to worry, that it was an honest mistake.

My mother was to begin the horrible treatment that would eventually kill her.

I don't remember the exact day that my mom was admitted, but I think it was around December 16th because I remember that my birthday was coming up and she was upset that she had not gotten me a present. I told her that the best present she could get me was to hang in there and never to give up. She agreed, and we were BOTH happy on my birthday.

I stayed in and around my mother for about a month, and in that month my birthday came and went, Christmas came and went, and then New Years came and went. It was all secondary to me, because I was going to try my hardest to help my mom. I wanted to keep her spirits up. I wanted to build her strength back up.

At the beginning, every day I would come in with something different to eat. I tried to bring her things she liked to eat, but she didn't have much taste. She ate anyway. She knew it would help her, and we joked that when I was sick as a kid my mom would always tell me to "eat, eat"!

People who have spoken with me since have asked me if I had had a terrible Christmas holiday having not seen my daughters and wife. I do feel bad for Cheryl, Kimberly, and Kristen, and I am very sorry that I wasn't there with them, and that my being away, and my mom being in the hospital probably made them very sad.....but I would tell these people that I personally couldn't have had a better Christmas. Oh sure, it could have been happier, but I was there trying to help my mother in her time of need. It's not that I felt heroic or anything...it was quite a sad time....its just that I knew I was doing the most important thing I could at that

moment, and that I knew it was really important for my mom and her getting better. There is nothing worse than being sick and alone in a hospital.

I know I really don't mean this the way it sounds because it really was a sad holiday, but I thought it was the best Christmas I had had.

I think my mom was going through Chemotherapy on Christmas night. It was tough going on the first night. But it seemed to go better on the second and even better on the third....then they noted that mom's kidneys had started to shut down. They pumped fluids in and they seemed to get better.

Shortly thereafter her white blood count went through the floor. This was normal for Chemo, but her count went very very low. So low that they placed her in a private room. At the same time, her platelets count went way down. They were very nervous, and everyone entering and exiting had to wear masks and aprons.

Before I go much further I have to say that my mom had some really nice roommates. I forget every one of their names, but she pretty much liked them all. The first woman was an old woman who was very thin, and from time to time seemed to stop breathing. She was in her 90's, but she seemed pretty tough. She would zone in and out, and I think she was finally released to a nursing home.

The second woman was a woman who was in for a bowel surgery. She kept telling people she was in for a small problem in her eye, but I think she just said that to make herself feel better. I think her name was Mrs. Waxman, and she was a really nice woman. Her operation went well, and she was released.

The third woman was a slightly elderly white haired woman who had fallen and broken her hip. She was determined to live alone, and she had slipped with her walker and fractured her hip. She didn't want anything to do with a nursing home, and she seemed frightened of them. They tried so hard to get her to go, but she refused. I don't know what happened to her, and I don't remember what her name was. She was planning to take a walk down to see my mom the day my mom died. I never got back to see her because I know I would have cried when talking to her.....and that would not have done her any good. I hope and pray that she is doing well.

The hospital memory has all run together for me. There are only two other instances that stick out in my head, but before I mention them, I have to mention two other things.

First, I was trying so hard to pray for my mother. I had made a promise to myself that everytime I would pass by the chapel, I would go in and say a prayer. So, every time I went down to eat (2nd floor to basement) I would stop on the first floor and say a prayer in the chapel. I would stop on my way up, as well as in and out of the building. I came to love that chapel, and the statue of Mary in the front.

She seemed to be looking at me as I prayed. She almost seemed to be crying with me.

On a Saturday, I went into the Chapel and said confession. After saying my confession, I spoke to the priest about that was going on, and how I felt. I wanted to know if there was anything I could do to pray more and he mentioned that perhaps I should try to read the bible more. He suggested that even reading small parts from time to time would be helpful. A paragraph, a sentence, a page. I could just stick my finger into the bible and read the section I randomly point to.

The other story I have is about a Portuguese woman who is named Maria. I had been trying to pray the Rosary because my mother had taught me that praying the Rosary was powerful medicine. So, I had not remembered how to pray it, and it turned out I had confused Our Fathers with Hail Marys....and was saying 1 Hail Mary and 10 Our Fathers in between. Maria gave my mom a small prayer packet with a set of Rosary beads and a paper describing how to say the Rosary. My mom knew, but I didn't...and I carried that paper with me until just a few weeks ago when it wore out and fell into pieces. Mary also gave me a Scapular and I wore it until it fell to pieces and fell off my neck. I have to go back to thank Maria one of these days. (and to see the Priest and thank him as well)

I have only one story to finish before I go off to bed. I had promised my mom to come in early so that I could travel over with her in the Ambulance for her radiation treatment. Well, that morning after I took a shower I was drying myself off when I noticed that I was standing in a puddle of blood. It really scared me but I tried to keep my cool. I went upstairs and called the Ambulance. I noted that I was standing in a very big puddle of blood.... Probably 3 feet across. I then called Cheryl's mother and she suggest that I try to apply pressure to stop it. I thought it was coming from my lower leg and sat down and clamped my legs together. When the ambulance came, they thought someone had been killed....there was so much blood. They decided that it was probably a verucose vein and took me to the Goddard....where my mother was! Guess who the doctor on duty was? Dr. Smith!

Anyway, I had Cheryl's mother call my mom and tell her a story about my being busy that morning. I went back and changed clothes and went back by 1:00 p.m. to see my mom. I never mentioned my bleeding problem, but she did notice my holding my legs up per the Doctors orders. I didn't want to worry her....but later I think I might have leveled with her because I remembered that that was what she had said to me that Saturday when we sat and talked....and I knew how much I had wished she had bothered me so that I could help.

The last comment I had was about the say I remember like it was today. Actually, I remember my mom's last breath with the same clarity.

The first day I really remember clearly was January 2nd. My mom had gotten weaker and weaker and that night her breathing was irregular and getting more and

more shallow. She was having bad contractions that looked to me to be heart attacks. She was in great pain, and you could see it in her face. She had been spared all pain up until that point, and all the doctors had been amazed. But now, she was in pain.

My mom was in a coma state; non-responsive and a nurse came in and told me that it would be a matter of minutes before she would die. I was shocked. My mom was still having these heart attacks, and she appeared to be in real pain. I suddenly didn't know what to do...I had told myself that I would never give up, and my mom and I had agreed that we would fight this, but that was before she was in such pain. I was actually thinking that I should pray for god to take her life because she was in such pain. I didn't want to lose her, but didn't want to see her in pain.

I ran out of room and down to the chapel. I was crying, I was upset....probably tired, and certainly unsure of what I should even pray for. I just didn't know what to do. When I knelt down in front of the statue of the Virgin Mary to pray she again looked to be looking at me. I prayed for an answer. What should I do, what should I pray for. And the, honest to god, I just knew that I had to be positive. My mother used to tell me "let go and give it to god", and I think that's what I decided to do. Honest, that really happened...and I have to say this because no one believed what happened next.

I went back up to the room and prayed the Rosary next to my mom. I must have sat there for hours, and in the process I noticed that her breathing wasn't getting worse, but maybe a little stronger. As I prayed and told her all sorts of stories about my growing up, I thought I sensed her responding. First I thought she was just blowing small bursts of air as if to talk....then a very slight movement of her lips. Pretty soon, she was wiggling her cheek. Then even as her eyes were still pushed to the side (she had had a stroke of some sort) you could see that she was reacting and blowing air as a response....then slowly she started to grunt, and honest to god she slowly progressed until she finally say up on Jan 2nd and her and I were having a fine conversation about all sorts of things!

The doctors and nurses were amazed! I was almost in shock. And the most amazing thing was that I asked my mother if she heard me talking to her when she was in her coma, and she said she had and that it sounded like I was down an empty hall talking to her, but she heard me. She even told me one of the stories that I had told her about. I was in shock, and overjoyed that I had not given up on here after my trip to the chapel.

In the next few days, I tried to keep feeding mom, but she grew weak and went back into the coma. She went back to her weak breathing, and I tried to keep my faith and remain positive. The doctors had taken a cat scan and found that she had a lot of bleeding in her brain and that the pressure was probably causing these problems. She was again on deaths door, and I was told she was going to die any moment. She was in terrible pain again, I think worst than on the 2nd. I again



didn't know what to do and became very upset, not knowing whether to pray for her to die and stop the suffering, or pray for her to live. I had been positive only days before, but it was hard. I spoke with the Priest and he noted that it's out of my hands.

I think I tried to be positive, but I just don't remember. I know that the doctors had given me one more option, to cut a hole in the top of her head to relieve the pressure. They didn't know whether this would help or not, and I asked them not to do it because I didn't think she would want to be kept alive by extraordinary means, and I was really convinced by the "comeback" on January 2nd that this whole process was not up to me or the doctors (because they predicted she would die in minutes), but that it must be strictly "in gods hands". If she were meant to live, she would recover. At the time I thought I had made the right decision, and the doctors agreed.....but I will never be sure that I did. I pray to god that if I made a bad decision that he, my mother and my father will find it in their heart to forgive me. Please god, forgive me.

The moment of my mom's death is probably hard to read, and I am sitting here trying to decide whether I even want to talk about it. Let me just say that I was spared by god again. I was sitting next to mom talking to her, when the nurse came in. I was in the middle of a story, but it was time to take her blood pressure so I stopped and moved aside. The instant the nurse sat down to take the pressure, my mother coughed up blood and breathed her last breath. The nurse was upset because this was the first person she witnessed die. I was not sure what to think. On the one hand I was very upset that my mom had passed away....but given the things I had seen on the 2nd, and how I had been spared at that moment, I KNEW that god was present in that room, and that she was on her way up to heaven. I began to pray for my father and mother that they can both find their way to heaven, and that if there was anything they had done to keep them from heaven, I prayed that god could forgive them.

Now, I find myself wanting to learn more about being Christian. I want to learn more about the bible...but I am afraid. I just don't know if I am good enough to make the trip. I realize that every human is a sinner, but I just don't know if I have the moral fiber to really make myself better.

I want to be a good example for my kids as my parents were for me.