

Eulogy of Cathy Green

I. INTRODUCTION

My mom was my Kindergarten room mom and Brownie leader. She taught Sunday school and hosted my class Easter egg hunt in our backyard. We lived in Memphis, Tennessee, and although she went on to have a teaching career when I was much older, she was a stay-at-home mom throughout most of my childhood. I was the first born, when she was only 24 years old, and three years later, she had my sister, Courtney. She majored in Education with a focus on Home Economics at Memphis State, but my parents always joked that the only thing she knew how to cook when they married was the cherries jubilee recipe she had learned in school. I think she only caught a few fingernails on fire. Well, she must have learned because we had family dinners every night at 6pm like clockwork, both before and after she began teaching. All of our birthday cakes were homemade, from scratch, not a box, and all of our Halloween costumes were homemade, sewn by my mom. I can remember learning about TV dinners at a friend's house in 5th grade and asking why we had never had those. When I attended Ole Miss for college, my mom made all my dresses for the football games. She also sewed matching bedskirts for me and my roommate for our well-decorated Ole Miss dorm room.

II. BODY

My mom was strong and protective, often telling me that she dared anyone to try and hurt us on her watch. And there were a few times that she came between me and tragedy.

Run Away Horse Story

When I was in fifth grade, we lived in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in a great family neighborhood that had a neighborhood stable. I took English riding lessons, and we owned a beautiful Palomino quarter horse named Mischief. Down a gravel road from the stable was a riding arena and an open soccer field. One day, I was riding a friend's horse in the soccer field when the horse decided to head back to the barn at a full gallop with my little 11-year-old self on its back. My mom knew that I'd likely be thrown when the horse reached the stable, if I made it that far. So, she did what my riding instructor had told her to do if this situation ever happened. She stepped into the path of the galloping horse, stood up straight, stuck her arms out like a cross, looked up to the sky, and prayed that the horse would stop. And he did. And I managed to hang on. My hero had saved me.

There was another time she saved me. This time from a difficult teacher. To tell this story — and it's my favorite story about my mom — I have to throw myself under the bus a little bit. So, before I do that, I want to say that throughout school I was almost always the teachers' pet. I was the kid who stayed after school to help the teacher grade papers, the one the teacher assigned to monitor the other students if she had to leave the room. Regardless of the reward system (I went to 4 different elementary schools), I received all the stars, stickers, monthly reward parties, principal reward parties, etc. But things were different with my 8th grade English teacher, Ms. Giovini in San Antonio, Texas. Ms. Giovini was a relatively new, young teacher who often did things in an illogical manner, and I was

perhaps a little too quick to tell her so. For example, she told us at the **end** of the year that we needed to turn in a notebook with all of our assignments from throughout the year. Ghee, it would have been nice to know that at the beginning of the year. Things like that.

Anyway, one day, Ms. Giovini announced to the class that she wanted to encourage creative writing — and not for any grade or reward. Just when the mood struck us to write, she wanted us to write. To facilitate this, she told us that she had created folders for each of us in the back of the classroom where we could put our creative writings, and no one would look at them — not even her. Being the naïve 8th grader that I was, I believed her. At the time, I was reading Jackie Collins novels (which I was allowed to do — my parents had no media limits — favorite movies in my house were Smokey & the Bandit and Best Little Whore House in Texas). So, I wrote a Jackie Collins-esq type story and placed it in my own personal creative writing folder that no one was going to look at not even Ms. Giovini. Well, it wasn't long before Ms. Giovini asked me to stay after class and told me that she saw my story. I, of course, said, but you said she weren't going to look in the folders. To which she said, "that's neither here nor there." Defeated, I said, "are you going to tell my mom?" and she said, "I haven't decided yet." Well, I went home that day and very nervously over tears told my mom what I had done. To my surprise, she was not upset at all. Earlier that week she had read how Jackie Collins used to get in trouble in school for writing dirty stories. She was very excited and said this is great news — you are going to be a rich and famous author one day!!

Ms. Giovini never called my mom about the story.

Two months later, Ms. Giovini asked me and another girl to stay after class and accused us of cheating on a take-home short essay assignment. I tried to tell Ms. Giovini that I had no idea what she was talking about; I wasn't even friends with the other girl. But Ms. Giovini wouldn't listen. Well, I did the only thing I knew to do. I went to the office and called my mom. She wasn't home but I left a voicemail that I am pretty sure was hard to understand between all the sobs. Within 30 minutes, both my parents were at the school. So, we were in a meeting with my parents, myself, Ms. Giovani, and the school counselor discussing the alleged cheating when Ms. Giovani says, "oh, and by the way, the other day, I found a story that your daughter wrote that contained foul language and sexual references." A silence fell over the room, and I think my mom must have slowly counted to 10 in her head before she very quietly said: "do you think that's important?" Somewhat taken aback, Ms. Giovini said "well, yes I do." And, again, I think my mom must have slowly counted to 10 in her head before very quietly saying: "No, I mean, do you really, really think that's important?" More composed this time, Ms. Giovani said she did. To which, my mom said: "then why the hell didn't you tell me about it when it happened two months ago?!"

Needless to say, that was the last we heard about the dirty story. And for the record and the sake of my own good name, I will note that the principal ruled that I had not cheated and took the grade book away from Ms. Giovini as far as I was concerned. My hero had saved me again.

My mom never stopped watching out for me. She taught me the value of having a parent at home to care for one's children, as well as the value of hard work and a career. When I decided to move to California after law school and join my law firm, which is a nationally recognized large law firm, my mom insisted on speaking with one of the partners to make sure that the firm's health insurance plan was adequate. They still tease me about that to this day – some 16 years later.

My mom's career spanned 45 years, and like many women, had many starts and stops. She first taught home economics at an inner-city school in Memphis. She stopped working when she learned she was pregnant with me and stayed at home for 8 years before working off and on as we moved from Houston to Dallas to Oklahoma to San Antonio. But even when she was teaching, she was always home when we were home – summers, after school, if we were sick, holidays. Then we moved to Houston, and, with both of us older, she could focus more on her teaching career. She taught science at Bleyl Middle School for 12 years. She loved her Bleyl teacher friends and those Friday afternoon teacher happy hours.

In her early 50s, she received a Masters in Counseling from Sam Houston State University and transitioned to a counselor at Bleyl. Eventually she transferred to become a counselor at the Alternative School, giving her an opportunity to focus more on counseling youth and less on scheduling. She retired from her full-time position at 59 but went on to serve as a counselor to the district's homeless children on a part-time basis until October 2016 when the cancer made it too exhausting to continue.

Speaking of cancer, my mom was diagnosed with Stage 2 breast cancer around her 47th birthday over 20 years ago in 1996. She underwent a mastectomy, 35 radiation treatments, and countless weeks of chemotherapy. But through it all, she kept teaching. In the Fall of 1997, she participated in a clinical trial in which she underwent a stem cell transplant with massive dosing of Chemotherapy. She had to stay in an isolation room at the Methodist Hospital in downtown for 2 months. Then there was peace and remission for 15 years. Then, in 2012, at age 62, her breast cancer metastasized to her bones. She underwent radiation and hormone therapy until that no longer stopped the progression. Three years later, at the age of 65, the cancer spread to her liver, where it continued to slowly progress despite oral chemotherapy and targeted radiation treatment. This past December, at age 67, she started IV Chemo, but her body was too weak to tolerate the chemo. She made the decision to stop treatment on February 10 and died one month later.

III. CONCLUSION

The fact of the matter is that metastatic breast cancer is the only breast cancer that kills. In the last 40 years, the metastatic breast cancer death toll has not changed significantly, nor has the mean survival rate of 3 years. Every day, 110 women die of metastatic breast cancer in the United States. There is no cure, only never-ending treatments meant to lessen

pain or extend life by a few short months. Treatment for a METS patient is forever or until they die. Ending chemo means entering hospice. Every year, the Susan Komen foundation raises an obscene amount of money under the Race for a Cure trademark but uses very little of the money raised towards funding research to cure breast cancer. The bulk of the money goes toward raising awareness, so that more women can be diagnosed and take the drugs manufactured by its largest sponsors. Well, we are all aware of breast cancer and will be fooled no longer. If you're inclined to join the fight against breast cancer, please don't run a pink race in my mom's name. Instead, donate to an organization that actually uses the money raised to fund clinical studies to find a cure for metastatic breast cancer. One of my mom's favorites was the Dr. Susan Love Research Foundation. Thank you and God bless.

Christy Lea (Cathy's daughter)