



My beautiful mother, Cherie, passed away on November 9, 2004 from Ovarian Cancer. She was about to turn 48-years old, and I was turning 24, about to start my adult life after graduating from college, without my mother. I thought as I grew older, I wouldn't need my mom to hold my hand through situations like I did when I was younger. Boy, was I wrong. I feel that ovarian cancer has robbed me of the years I should be spending with her, the years of adulthood that don't make sense without her.

She was diagnosed in May 2003 with Stage 3C ovarian cancer, which they found after she went to surgery for a routine hysterectomy after they found a mass by her ovary. When the doctor came into the waiting room when her surgery was done and uttered the word "cancer," I knew at that moment our lives--my mom's, my brother's, and mine--would never be the same. When I saw her the next day, I had everything planned out on what to say. As I started talking she said "The doctor told me. I know. I am going to fight this bitch." And she fought with everything she had, even when her body rejected one of the chemotherapy drugs that could have saved her life, even when we had to make trips to the emergency room in the middle of the night because of her fevers, she never asked "why me" and never stopped believing that she could beat ovarian cancer. She was considered cured by November 2003, and lived as a proud cancer survivor for a few months. In April 2004 we started noticing that something wasn't right, and the cancer had returned. She tried other treatments of chemotherapy, but the cancer was too aggressive. She decided to enter hospice, thinking living without chemo drugs in her body would buy her some time. She didn't last long after that, but she died knowing she put up a good fight.

My mother was always a strong person, being a single mom, working sometimes two jobs to make sure her kids had a good life. Even though she didn't always have it easy, she made sure her kids were always provided for, her kids always came first. We were best friends, and became each other's rock while she was fighting cancer. I was her caregiver and she understood even though she was going through the disease, that I was also stressed and needed to take care of myself. It

was the hardest time of my life, but I am glad I had that time with my mother to at least get to know her more as a person.

A part of me will always be missing since she died, but I know that I have her strength, and people tell me, her smile. She believed the best in people, and she was loved by so many. She looked on the bright side of things, and told me to "follow my dreams." She encouraged my writing, and since she has passed, I have free-lanced for health publications and blogged for various websites. I would love to write a book about my experience with my mother one day. I feel like it is something I have to do, something to honor her with. When people talk about my mom, they remember her beauty, inside and out, and how brave she was, not only fighting cancer, but just how she handled all the obstacles she encountered with such grace and class. Whenever my brother and I are going through difficult times, we know at least we have our guardian angel, our Mom, helping us and looking down on us from heaven.

Written by Tracey Fuller