

A Daughter's Love Story

by Sue Hynes

It was in May 2006, after much persistence, that we found that my mother's lung cancer, which we thought was gone, was actually growing and had metastasized to her brain. Her prognosis... at best... 3 months. I was fortunate to have been working for the Elwha Tribe for 14 years. Throughout my tenure at the Tribe, I learned how they value family and put the care of a family member in high regard. There was no question whether I could take the time off to care for my mom. It was a given.

I knew Rose and her Hospice. Throughout the years, I called on them to come and help me with the families I cared for. Now it was my turn. When Ed came out, I knew I didn't have to make nursing decisions for my mom. The hospice nurses came and I was allowed to be the daughter. I didn't have to be the professional with the right answers. I was allowed to question, grieve, and at times be overwhelmed, tired, confused and sad. The hospice nurses listened to me. I had the team. Olympic Memorial Home Health helped with bathing, the hospital bed and any other supply I needed was readily available. Rose sent sweet Jane, who was a Godsend. Jane came to sit with Mom while I got out to the pool for a swim and the gym for exercise. This break allowed me the self renewal I needed so I could continue to give all I could to my mom. Mom really enjoyed Jane. I remember there was one day when in lifting Mom, I hurt my back. Instead of going to the pool, I laid in bed. I heard Jane talking to Mom and I remember how gentle she was. I was so happy she was with Mom.

My brother came from Nevada and we knew it would be the last time he would see her. When he left at 7am for his flight, Mom began her final phase. The Hospice nurse came and we adjusted her meds to help her pain. I knew it was her time to start her journey. Both my daughter and I lay beside her and told her how wonderful she was and how much she meant to us. Mom was never one to say goodbye. I called Jane and she came quickly. I knew Mom would struggle if we stayed. I asked Jane if she could sit by her side while we took a nap. I went in my room and fell asleep. The next thing I knew, I awoke quickly as I felt my mom leaving. I started to go to her at the same time Jane tapped on my door and told me

she was gone. The gift that Jane gave to Mom, me and my daughter was something that can only come from heaven. The remainder of that day was a blur. I do remember not knowing how I would have done it without the love and support of Hospice.

While caring for my mom, I kept waiting for her to say something profound, a last teaching to her daughter. It didn't come through words, but through silence. In her last days, the material world didn't matter. All that mattered were her earthly family and heavenly family. The only words she could say were *I love you*. She took peace, with us by her side, while she held tight to her rosary. In the end, the message was simple and, to me, profound. The most important thing in this world is love.

I marvel at where I am today and what I do, I'm sure my mom smiles down on me from above and is proud.

Side note: It wasn't until I assumed the role of Director of VHOCC that Jane told me my mom was the first person she sat with while this life ended. Believe me, I would have never guessed.