

INTRODUCTION TO MY LIFE

By
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I lived those months in denial. Even though I could see his deterioration, I would not let myself believe he would leave me. He promised to love me forever. How could this happen? To me! On May 26, 1988, at 3:30 AM, Michael, my husband of twenty- three years, father of my three children, lover and best friend, died at age forty-nine from large cell lymphatic cancer. He was supposed to live longer, much longer, but when his body stopped making or accepting platelets, he had no way to fight infection. Within five months, he died.

Never the popular teen, I didn't date until I was in college and then rarely. I thought I would never marry. I met Michael, by chance, in the college recreation room. Fourteen months later we were married. I went from living with my parents to living with my husband. He took care of me, didn't want me to work and wanted to start a family. I finished college and gave birth to my first child within days of graduation.

Michael paid the bills. If anything in the house broke, he took care of it and dealt with the service people. He cleaned up the kitchen after dinner (he didn't like the way I did it) and did his own laundry (I left his shirts in too long). He was a wonderful companion and father. He was a natural leader with a calm personality and a wry sense of humor. And, most importantly, he loved me unconditionally.

Over the days and, weeks that followed the funeral, I questioned myself. Did I do enough? Did I spend too much time on the phone fighting with the insurance company for coverage? Did I waste too much time arguing with the hospital administration over his proper care? Did I spend enough time with him? Did I touch him enough? Did I pray enough? Of course, I knew it really didn't matter. His disease was too invasive. Medicine at the time couldn't cure him. And, my all prayers were answered with a heartbreaking "No." Nevertheless, it took a long time for my self-inflicted guilt, together with my grief, anger, pain and self-pity to subside. I struggled daily to make sense of my life, to find a reason – any reason – to get up every day.

The voice in my head was never quiet. I was in tears more than not. Seeking some sort of equilibrium, I began to write. My inner voice became words, pouring out in a jumbled stream of consciousness. Although grammatically incorrect, my thoughts became real, on paper, to see, touch and feel. As the past became the past for me, I was able to start my journey forward.

My writings and observations emerged as beacons along my way – and I hope that they may help light yours.