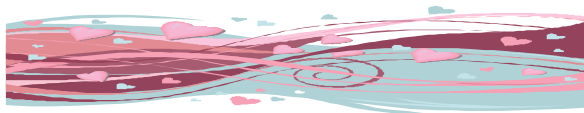


## *A plea for help*

*Hi, my name is Tawni. I have a story to tell, and I am hoping that perhaps you might help with the final chapter. This is a personal story, and one I have toiled whether or not to share. But I feel desperate, and am reaching out to my friends, extended family members, associates, and even strangers asking for help. Please know that this is a bit wordy, but I ask you to take a few minutes to read it.*



This is a story about my parents and the recent cancer diagnosis of my father.

To provide a little background, in 1993 my father suffered a massive heart attack at the age of 46, rendering his heart working at only 25% capacity. He was placed on a heart transplant list to save his life. With only what could be considered a miracle, his heart began to heal itself. Approximately two years later he suffered another heart attack in the middle of the night and my mother had to resuscitate him, literally bringing him back to life. He then underwent a quadruple bypass and had a heart defibrillator implanted. As the years have gone by, he has been on several medications, of which resulted in liquid

insulin resistant diabetes, and also suffered several non-crippling mini strokes.

Approximately two years ago (2006) he had another mini stroke which threw a blood clot behind his left eye, blinding this eye and double blindness in his right eye. At this time, my parents applied for disability, because it wasn't certain whether he would regain his sight. Being proud people, my father was determined to continue working, and his boss was very accommodating. Due to the double blindness, my father was unable to drive, as well as facilitate certain tasks like using a computer and keyboard or pressing the buttons to dial the telephone. As the result of trying to maintain employment, my father was denied a disability claim, and considered fully functional.

Since my mother wasn't working, she drove him to and from work. Deciding that she could stay at his place of employment during the day, rather than traveling to and fro, she began assisting my father with the tasks he was unable to perform. At six months he began to show signs of improvement, although not completely healed. Because of her assistance, my father's boss offered my mother a job to work in the same department as my father, and essentially becoming his subordinate. Now this was not a concern of theirs, as my parents work well together, but the issue became that corporate policy apparently forbade

employees to work as subordinates to family employees, but this was overlooked locally by my father's boss.

My mother worked in her capacity for a year, enjoying her job and the challenges she was given, as well as the extra income. Also, since my father still could not drive, it was convenient. After this year's time, my father's boss was relocated to California, and three days after his departure, my mother's position was terminated. This was a disappointment and a bit of an upset, but since my father had his job and seemed to be on the mend, dealt without much turmoil.

Two weeks after my mother was let go, my grandmother (her mother) noticed a lump in the back of her neck. Having always been healthy and very active at 83 years old (skiing every winter, golf, tennis and weekly bridge games) it was thought to be fluid that had settled from a very bad flu she had upon her return from hiking the Grand Canyon the month before (yes, she hiked it in April of 2007...she was an amazing, healthy woman, who lived independently in a wonderful one bedroom condo in a yuppy part of town). This mass began to grow at a rapid rate, and in May 2007 she was diagnosed with Lymphoma. Her prognosis was good due to her overall health, but the treatment would take a course. With my mother's attitude, she saw that her being let go from her job as a

blessing so that she could care for her mom.

Wanting to maintain independence, my grandmother continued to live on her own, while my mother provided her with treatment and doctor appointment transportation, as well as ensuring her proper nutrition by grocery shopping, and running errands. My grandmother tolerated the treatment very well, with her only symptom being taste and texture loss of food. The only medications she took were a multi vitamin and for her blood pressure. Unfortunately, due to the loss of food enjoyment, she began to lose weight and weaken. We tried everything to provide her with the proper nutrition, but the cancer metastasized to her spine and brain, and after a week in Hospice, my grandmother passed away on September 1, 2007, just 4 months after her diagnosis.

Two months later, while still dealing with the loss of my grandmother, and trying to get life back to normal, my father's position at work was terminated, leaving my parents without an income, and no medical benefits. My mother, having very little employment experience due to my father's ability to provide, allowing her to be a full time homemaker and mother, sought work in a area she had the most experience, caregiving. Unfortunately, due to her years outside of the workforce and limited education, she qualified for a job as a Nursing Assistant- Registered at

\$12.50 an hour, with a medical insurance benefit for two costing an out of pocket expense of over \$400 a month. Due to my father's health history, he was deemed unemployable, and at 59 years old, my mother became the primary income provider. With my father's status of apparent disability, they re-applied for Social Security Disability Insurance.

As a result of governmental red tape, they resorted to hiring a lawyer (who is still fighting with Social Security) to advocate for them. In the meantime, they had some savings and were optimistic.

*Before I continue, my parents have never been in debt, have lived well within their means (my mother is an amazing budgeter in ways I cannot seem to fathom), have volunteered in the community (my mother has worked for the American Red Cross for over 42 years teaching First Aide/CPR, running blood drives, and providing disaster relief locally and Nationally; both of my parents have provided services of food, transportation, and activities to elderly populations for over 15years), priding themselves for being self-sufficient and able to assist others in need. In the recent months they have had to sell several of their possessions of late for extra income, which I only found out about by accident a few weeks ago.*

On July 31, 2008 my father of 61 years was diagnosed with Oral Squamous Cell Carcinoma, a cancer typically reserved for

those who are heavy smokers and alcohol abusers (90%), both of which my father has NEVER been. He just happens to be one of the random 10%. In the course of the diagnosis, a PET scan showed that the tumor is isolated to his right tonsil and a lymph node. Due to his heart condition, the treatment options are limited, but he will be receiving a rigorous schedule of radiation five days a week and chemotherapy one day a week for several weeks/months, after which time the hope is that the tumor will have reduced enough for surgical removal, without having to remove a portion of his throat, tongue, and upper lobe of his right lung. On August 8, 2008 he had a feeding tube surgically inserted, due to the growth of the tumor and rendering swallowing difficulty, and in preparation for the imminent debilitation of treating his cancer in his ability to eat normally.

To add injury to insult, my parents' savings has depleted tremendously, and now my parents are faced with the financial challenges of cancer treatment, such as \$20 co-pays for each radiation appointment and in fuel cost of travel from Vancouver, WA to Portland, OR 5 days a week (a 30 mile round trip) at ~\$4.79 a gallon just for his cancer treatment transportation. Now this may not seem to be a lot, but for people who are now on a fixed income, facing not only the fight against cancer, but unexpected medical bills and treatment, food supplements (do to the feeding tube), as

well as every day bills for mortgage, utilities, etc., it is a difficult and fearful reality.

Now you might ask, why I am not providing financial support...well I am as I can. My sister and I are doing what we can, but we have been faced with our own personal struggles making it difficult to provide what we know our parents need. We are trying to help out with our time and transportation, working around work and family demands, and giving what we can afford. My sister's husband recently lost his job, and she has become the sole provider on a part-time income. I am adjusting my work hours to provide a full weekday of assistance, and to give my mom a break. As the saying goes, desperate times call for desperate actions.

So the purpose of this story is to ask for charity for my parents. I apologize and it is a difficult request for me to make, but I lie awake every night trying to think of ways to help my parents out, from selling things on craigslist, to selling raffle tickets for vacation packages, to saving all of my spare change. I have even opted to sack lunch it so that the money I save can be given to my parents. I want to try to relieve some of the burden and stress my parents are facing so that my father has a fighting chance to become a cancer survivor, and that my mother doesn't lose her emotional and physical health in the process to trying to support the fight. I am hoping to raise enough money to ease my

parents' burden during my father's treatment.

Thank you for reading my story. Regardless if you can contribute, please help spiritually by putting my family in your prayers.

With heartfelt appreciation,  
Tawni  
08/19/08

### **Vacation Raffle to help raise money**

*As I mentioned, I am seeking things I can sell. I have a vacation package that I was going to use for my husband's and my 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary this September, but under the circumstances, I feel selling would be putting it to better use.*

*Now since nothing in this life is free, I am to selling raffle tickets at \$10 each for a chance to win one of 2 vacation packages. These packages are for accommodations only (therefore, airfare and amenities are not included), and for 4 adults OR 2 adults and 3 children, and may be upgraded. You may purchase as many tickets as you want to increase your chances, as well as specify which package you are interested in.*

*My father is starting Chemotherapy on August 28, 2008 and Radiation September 2, 2008. With optimism, I am hoping to raise enough money to at least cover my parents' fuel and co-pay expenses.*

*Tickets will be sold until September 4, 2008. Two drawings will be held on September 5, 2008, and results announced on September 8, 2008.*

*Basic particulars are below. Please note that these vacation packages will be transferred into your name and that you will have 12 months to schedule your vacation.*

*Tickets may be purchased through Speedboat Coffee until September 4, 2008.*

**Thank You & Good Luck!!!**

### **Vacation Packages**

#### **Package 1**

- 4 days/3 nights in Orlando, Florida
- 7 day economy car rental OR 2 adult theme park passes
- 3 days/2 nights in Daytona Beach, Florida

#### **Package 2**

- 5 days/4 nights in Cancun, Mexico
- NOTE: this package may be upgraded to (1) all inclusive resort, (2) a cruise, or additional days/nights. You will need to contact the travel coordinator for details if you win this prize ☺