

My Heroine Who Never Gave Up Hope

by Kenita Gibbins

My second cousin Jackie came into this world six years before me. We didn't become fast friends until she moved to Denver and called me. I started learning about the amazing Jackie from family members. Her mother, my great aunt, and her husband felt nothing but joy anticipating Jacqueline's birth. And then a few days later the new mother failed to survive. Jackie's dad took care of her as best he could. Aunt Lena stepped into the role. A few years later Jackie's dad remarried. Jackie had another great mother. Eventually, Jackie married. That husband turned out to be alcoholic and the marriage didn't survive.

Early in life, she was diagnosed with diabetes. Later, Jackie learned how to know exactly what type of insulin she needed. I heard her correct an employee at the nursing place. She didn't ever give up hope but knew how to create her own optimism.

Jackie decided to take a job in Denver. Here she met Bill and his three children. Jackie was no longer a childless woman after they married. Just as things seemed perfect she was diagnosed with tuberculosis. Because of her diabetes, the doctors were unable to cure her and part of her lung had to be removed. She was confined from her family at National Jewish. It was at this time I began to see the hope that seemed to be inborn

My cousin and I inherited some money. Jackie and I revealed we both have the curiosity of the world in our genes. She was able to bring her insulin into Russia with tenacity. She fought a pickpocket thief in Amsterdam. Somewhere along the way she decided she needed to become the family genealogist. She researched for years. All of the relatives have a wonderful book. We all thought the Brumbelow's were Irish. No, we have French blood too.

They moved back and forth with the seasons to Green Valley, Arizona after Bill retired. They loved life. An almost fatal car accident injured them both for the rest of their lives. Jackie had to be flown home in a Flight for Life helicopter. She woke up en route to St. Anthony's hospital to a surprise. My son who was a paramedic at the time was with her. Hope came back. She was with family!

Their oldest son moved into their home and helped take care of them. After Bill passed she had to go to a care center. Her minister and women from her church visited regularly. I popped in when I could. Jackie rallied and started painting. She created marvelous pictures. She reached out to her roommate and others in the place to comfort them. A couple of years passed and Jackie began to decline and go back and forth to the hospital. She told us her birth mother had visited and she would be coming to take her "Home" soon. Even with pending death, she found a way to hope. I will never forget the lessons she taught to me and didn't even know her influence. We can all reach out for hope.