

# 7-11-21

I have witnessed the onset of death far too many times in my 66 years. I know what it looks like, sounds like, feels like ... death is noisy when it's on it's way - if you are aware. I was very aware of what was happening to my mother - I knew the path we were headed down. That's why I stayed the last two nights of her life at home, lying next to her, holding her, petting her, comforting her. I'm not sure if it helped her. She seemed to get worse by the minute. But, I know it helped me. I love those two nights with her. No matter how difficult they were, I love those two nights.



Most mother and daughter relationships are fraught with turmoil and conflict. Mother and I had our fair share of turmoil and conflict, but we experienced our troubles early in life, and after that, we had smooth sailing - for the most part.

I learned to deal with my “mother issues” on my own without including her because, after all, they were MY mother issues, not hers. So learning to process past pain turned out to be one of the best personal skills I could have ever developed - for both of us - those skills preserved and enhanced our relationship.

I loved my mother and devoted a major part of my life to making her happy. Oddly, I have not gotten to the sadness of my mother's passing - yet. It sneaks around the corner and starts to

move-in, and I remember something awesome that mom and I did, and the sadness goes away. It feels like my mother's spirit is protecting me from those bad feelings. They just stop, and a beautiful memory will pop into my mind, and I smile or laugh out loud.

Because mother was so uncomfortable at the end, and the environment was so dark with death, it was hard to see the beauty of her life as I was staring at the horror of her awaiting "death." But now that she has transcended, it is flooding back, and boy, oh boy, oh boy, did we have some magnificent times together. I saw my mother, in her 70's, ride a camel down the hill from the pyramids in Egypt. I had to intervene when she almost created an international incident when she was arguing about Jesus with a Muslim in the Holy Land. I watched her kiss the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia - you're not supposed to touch it, but... We ate lunch at the Getty museum in Malibu. We went through an earthquake in a highrise in Egypt. And I could go on, and on, and on. I have a 66 year history with my mother. We had some seriously fun times.

I do not believe in death. Yes, the body gives way to it's destiny, but... the soul - it transcends.

When someone I love "dies" - I continue the relationship. Sometimes, it gets better, richer, deeper, more profound. I sense passed away loved ones around me quite often, and I delve into that luscious feeling of being connected. I consider that feeling of connection my reward for the experiences we had together. I get to live those experiences over and over and feel them over and over. I feel the love that my loved one left me.

## Mother's History as Told to Me - By Her

Mother was born into a “normal” happy home with two parents. But that normal, happy home did not last long - disaster hit - her mother died.

This story I am about to share with you will illustrate how wise my mother was at a young age, and how one traumatic event altered her behavior.



### My Grandmother's Passing

My grandmother was taken to the hospital, and my grandfather was by her side. When my grandfather returned home to his children, he brought a box of donuts. Mother noticed that his eyes were red, and she said to herself, *my mother died*. She told me she decided to just be quiet and not say anything, and it would be okay. She did not want her brothers and sister to know... but she knew, and she held it in. That first traumatic event caused my mother to close off a part of herself. The pain and fear must have been overwhelming. She was just a little girl. I think a part of her closed off. I don't think she ever opened up that emotional portal again.

### My Grandfather's Passing

After her mother passed, she and her sister, my Aunt Lila, were shipped off to mean aunts, and the boys stayed with their dad until he died a few years later in a very mysterious way. Many years after Grandfather's passing, his story came out in a **True Crime** magazine. This is the

rumble about my grandfather's demise: After his wife died, he drank, a lot. One night, he got into a bar fight, and a man or two men followed him home and stabbed him in his home. Supposedly, granddad did not want his boys to know because he did not want them to take revenge, so he just quietly bled out. So my uncles were on their own, and everyone was somewhat old enough now, so the girls moved back into the house my granddad left them. And they managed, for the most part. Older kids taking care of younger kids. Mom would repeat that scenario in her own life.

Mother always spoke fondly of her parents. She loved them both, and she shared her memories of them with me. Her love of roses and painting roses came from her mother. Grandmother was sitting on a toilet in an out-house, and mom was with her, and grandmother was drawing a rose on a piece of paper and showing my mother how to do it. She said grandpa was a nice man, a handsome man, and a good guy. She told me the story of being in a crib and climbing out, and going to the kitchen to make herself coffee, and then walking back to her crib and getting back in so she could sit and drink it. Her dad said to his wife, "Look at that girl, she didn't spill a drop." Now how funny is that? A toddler making coffee and the parents are okay with it. I mean, really! Just too darn funny. Mom did love her coffee: two heaping sugars and lots of cream. I made her her last cup of coffee. I love that.

### **Mother Meets Dad**



Mother shared stories with me about her early life in Los Angeles. I could see the whole thing in my mind, just like a 1940's black and white movie. She lived on the East side of LA, and would hop on the trolley and take it to downtown LA to work at Clifton's - now a world famous Cafeteria - I have been there, and it is amazing! That's where she met my dad. He would stare at her and she would ignore him, and he would hop on the

trolly to follow her and talk to her. She played the typical hard to get, but nine children later...

Due to her marriage to Mr. Cravatt, she suffered. He was INTENSELY abusive. I never knew about it until I was an adult. I remember the first time mother talked about it with me, she was very disturbed and said she didn't want me to know and to think bad about him.

Anyone who knows me knows that I value the brutal truth. Mom was six months pregnant when he passed. So I never knew him. As a side note, I had one dream about him. I was about six, and I had just moved to Crowe Road. My mom had just married her second husband, Bob. Well, when my life began with my new dad, my DNA dad, (in a dream) came to Crowe Road, stood at the end, and waved at me. So sweet. He knew I was in good hands, and I was!

Mother's confession about her life as an abused wife was horrifying to me. No one wants that in their memory banks. After knowing about that, I had a lot more compassion for her and my siblings and what they must have endured. I often think I was spared that vision because my sensitive soul could not have endured any of it. But, she endured it. It was hard for her to talk about it, but as the years went by, when she did talk of it, she was much more calm about it.

I once asked her, "How did it stop, mom?" Here's the story.

### **How the Abuse Stopped**

She was making up the bed, and he approached her in an aggressive way, and she pulled off her shoe and held it like a hammer and threatened him and told him - never again. He was amused, laughed, and never once touched her again, but a year later, he was dead. He was

using my mother and my brothers as a punching bag. No longer able to vent his inner demons, he sort of exploded. That's a story for another time.

### **Before and After**

So mother's life with her abusive husband was over, and she was finally free, and she felt free. One day we were looking at old photos, and she said, "This is us when your dad was alive." It looked like a photo from the **Grapes of Wrath**. We looked dirt poor - worse than the Clampets before they struck oil. She handed me a different photo of us. I was about five, and it was Easter, and we were dressed to the nines. I had on a pretty dress with nice trim, a little hat, and a pair of white gloves. Mom said, "This is us after your dad." I loved the way she could so subtly stick it to someone. There was her strength right there in that photo. She made life better for us.



### **Mother's Support System**

Mother gave birth to a strong support system. After Mr. Cravatt died, her oldest son, my brother - Richard, went into the Air Force so he could send money back home. And

Mickey, her oldest daughter, at the age of 11 took over and literally ran the family until... well, she hasn't really stopped. She is the duly regulated matriarch of the family now that mother has retired. My brother Chip stole vegetables from local gardens and brought them home to cook. They were poor, but as the saying goes - most people are poor. The good news was, because of their teamwork - **the courage of children** - they kept the family together, and we all survived.

Mother was very proud of that - as she should be. I have said more than once, God knew what he was doing when he put my sister, Mickey, in charge because if he had put me in charge, I would have said - *everyone goes to foster care; look me up when you grow up*. My point is, I could have NEVER carried the burden my sister and brothers were given. I owe a lot of the goodness of my life to them. They truly made the path better for me - the youngest. Thank you, dear loved ones.

I have had, and am having, a wonderful life, and I have included mother in every part of it. When I was a talent agent, I cast her and my sisters in the hit TV show "Dallas" in the eighties, and they even got a little write up in the local paper about it. I took mom to the finest restaurants in LA. We sat at a front row performance of a popular play only to find out that it opens up on a woman's bare butt. We had a good laugh about that. My beautiful memories are flooding my mind. We shared a lot of our lives with each other.



### **Trickery and Glamour**

When I look at her glamour photos of mom, I remember the whole story behind them, and her resistance and my insistence, and the trickery I used to induce her and my Aunt Lila into that photo shoot.

I wanted that shot, and I got it. All it took was a little Grand Mariner in her coffee and some big band music, and voila - photos that will last forever.



### Reunited with her Vargas Family

I look at all the photos of her with her Vargas family, and I am honored to have facilitated her reunion with them. Mother, Aunt Ruth, and I have been on many a journey to San Diego, Las Vegas, Palm Springs, and LA so that mother could visit her family. And we had fun the whole time.

On one of her visits to LA without Aunt Ruth, Mom wanted to visit her sister in San Diego, and for some reason, I was unable to drive her. I thought it would be

nice for her to take a train. It travels along the coast, and it's really pretty. So I made all the arrangements: the tickets, the transportation to the train station, coaching her on how to hail a cab, Aunt Lilia's written address, and a snack bag. Mother later told me that when I gave her the snack bag, she thought I was being silly and treating her like a child. But she stayed quiet and took the snack bag. She said about an hour into the train ride, she thought, *hmmmm, I wonder what she put in the snack bag*, and she ate every bite. That was another moment that gave us a good laugh. I treasure those memories.

### On the Road Again

I remember in 1995, mom and Aunt Ruth flew to New York to meet me, and we had an experience that I call ***The Adventures of Caroline and Ruth***. We walked the streets of New York, the roads of Philadelphia, and we traveled down the east coast in my old RV towing an old postal jeep that they both learned to drive - **and push** - ha ha - another funny story.

On that trip, I remember strolling along an open area with a few houses here and there - cute houses, and those two saw a house and wanted to look in so, they looked in, and as it turns out - they were peeping Tom's because someone who lived there was inside. They took off running and laughing until they got to the bottom of the hill and jumped in the jeep and drove away like criminals - laughing all the way.

### **Documentaries Spread Love**

I love the documentaries I made of her Vargas family and her Cravatt family. She told me that Chip (after his divorce) became bitter, but after he watched my family documentary, it touched his heart and changed him for the better. Can you imagine how wonderful that made me feel to save my brother from bitterness? How sweet was that of Mom to share her insight with me? Thank you, mother. I love seeing our footprints in each other's life.

### **The Last Chapter**

Mother once told me that she saw her life in chapters. Her last chapter is now written. The final curtain has drawn, mother has taken her last bow, and she has made her exit, and I am filled to the brim with her love. This experience is so unusual because of the depth of love I feel from her. She left me a lifetime of beautiful memories and seriously funny moments.

I am rejoicing in her love and her new freedom. I have a lifetime of memories with her in: Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Egypt, The Holy Land, New York and the entire East Coast - just to name a few.

So here I am writing an Ode to my mother on her transcendence. I am thankful that I am so very, very peaceful. I know I was a good daughter to her. And that's not just my opinion.

Mom and I were visiting Uncle Johnny, and mother was a bit fussy around him; they often clashed. I was “tending” to her as I usually did, and after I finished and sat next to Uncle Johnny, he looked at me and shook his head and said, “You are a really good daughter to her.” His validation was so nice that he could witness my good intentions for my mother by being a good daughter. Thank you Uncle Johnny.

All my silly “mother issues” are over. I see everything from such an expanded point of view. What a life we had together.

My mother did a great job. She came into the world, She endured what she had to, and she held on as long as she could. She was responsible for bringing many, many, many souls into the world. I just can’t stop smiling when I think about her.

### **Mother’s Goodbye Gift to Me**

When mother was still lucid, I was kissing her good-bye one day, and she looked at me, smiled, and said, “you are a good woman.” Those were the sweetest words in the world, and that was a lovely gift she left me. I will always treasure her words. That moment is like harmonious music in my ears and the song plays over and over again in my heart, and I feel such peace.

Mother will always be in my heart. Her life is interwoven with mine. I believe her spirit is protecting me from the pain of her loss. Sure, it might cut loose later, and I will have my fits of pain. But, not right now. I am just spiritually rejoicing. When the pain comes, it will be a noble pain.

Everyone has to die. No options, no negotiations, that information is just one stark slice of human reality. The last nine months of mother's life, I truly believe she was willing herself to die. She was so very ready.

One day I asked her, "So how have you been? What have you been up to?"

She replied, "I've just been thinking about heaven and what it would be like to check it out." She made me laugh.

One day she woke up and rumbled around a bit and said, "I'm exhausted."

I said, "Good grief, mom. Sleeping wore you out."

We must have laughed over that one for a long time.

I'm glad her pain and suffering was brief, and I'm glad that she went on her own - without medication, and I'm glad her baby boy, Sam, and his family and other loved ones were around her. I'm sure his presence gave her the strength to move on. Family members told me they thought she was hanging on waiting for him to arrive, and when he did arrive, a short time later, she let go. She was not conscious, but she knew he was there. He brought her peace.

We have fulfilled our destiny together, mother. I bid you farewell, good passage, and my eternal, unconditional love, and may that love bring you strength as your journey continues. I will always cherish our time together, what you gave me, what I gave you, and a union that worked well for us both. God bless you and hold you tight. I know you will always be with me.

Your baby, Marguerite AKA Cissy

And finally, the sweetness of tears are releasing. So very sweet, mother, thank you.