

*A Short Biography of*  
*Christine Ellen Flagge Pinter*

*This biography was prepared especially for*

*Erik Pinter  
and  
David Pinter*



*by*

*Ken Pinter*



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I am writing this biography of your Mom with the hope that it will always help you remember the woman who gave you life. You can rest assured that she was your number one fan, loved you both very much, and would have given up a lot in order to see you both grow up to become the successful young men that you are.

I have chosen to write this letter in a format that highlights the characteristics of her personality and the events in her life that you should know and always remember. Hence, this letter is comprised of a series of short stories or paragraphs, each on a different point that you should remember.

There are a number of pictures of her in the accompanying album in this web site. The album is titled Flagge/Behling Picture Album. Other future albums may be added.

Here we go.

### **Birth**

Christine Ellen Flagge was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on 14 October 1948. Her parents, your grandparents, were Jerome and Bernice Flagge. They were of German descent, were of the Catholic faith, and were a well-known family and very active in the church and community, though not rich by any means.

Your Grandpa Flagge was a fireman all his life, and later in his career, was an MPO (motor pump operator). Today, that position is called Engineer, or in other words, fire truck pump operator and driver. On 25 April 1989 he had a massive heart attack and died at the age of 76.

Grandma Flagge was a housewife and worked at several office jobs during her life. As of this original writing, she is living in an assisted living home in Milwaukee. She had severe dementia. She died on 29 October 2003.

Your Mom had one brother, John, some years older than her, and as you will learn later, died early in life. You will recall playing with his kids, your cousins, Bryan, Brent, Brad, and Brenda (Missy) when we would visit them in Milwaukee.

She had 4 uncles: Gilbert Flagge, Cliff Flagge, Ray Flagge, and Hugh Crowley. I can't recall the names of their spouses except for Norma Crowley who was your grandma Flagge's sister.

### **A Birth Defect**

Your Mom developed a lump or tumor on her neck, so I am told, as an infant. It was probably Hodgkin's Disease. It was common at that time to treat the tumor with radiation needles or implants. This is what happened to your Mom, and of course she was cured of the condition. It is my firm belief, however, that this treatment, which at the time was successful in killing the tumor, was responsible for her breast cancer at the age of 37 years. No one can really be blamed for this: doctors at that time had no idea of the long-term effects of this treatment. There is a newspaper clipping in the album that describes Hodgkin's disease. It is likely that this is what she had. Current research has established a link between this treatment and breast cancer.

### **John and Mary**

Your Uncle John was, as you recall, a good-looking guy. He was maybe seven years older than your Mom. He worked all his life at a company in Milwaukee called Allen-Bradley (AB). He had no college degree but worked his way up in AB to manager of HR. Your Mom told me on a few occasions that he was a sort of bully with her, and that it went beyond just a harmless sibling rivalry. He apparently really tormented her and maybe hurt her when their Mom and dad were gone. This was discovered later and he was punished severely for his actions. After that, they both became very close. John married Mary Ann and they had 5 children. One, a girl, died in a freak car accident. I'll write more about that later. John developed a cancer, non-Hodgkins lymphoma, later in life, and died at the age of 55 on 18 December 1996 after a major battle with the disease.

Mary was a kidder and always had something funny to say to us. She had a way of making you feel welcome and OK when she was around. Her brother was active in Wisconsin politics. Shortly after John's death, Mary also developed a number of health issues including a respiratory problem, heart problems, and kidney cancer, and died at the age of 56 on 24 March 1997.

### **Karen Lynn**

I mentioned earlier that there is a fifth cousin (niece to your Mom). Shortly after I met your Mom, Karen died in a car accident. The date was 5 October 1968. Mary's family had a lake house. Karen, who was 2 years old, climbed into a car at the lake, and managed to take it out of park. The car was sitting on an incline and so it rolled down the hill and into the lake. Witnesses said later she was really enjoying the ride. Various people dove into the water to rescue her but were unsuccessful in doing so. I never actually met her because this accident occurred soon after I met your Mom at a fraternity party (more on that later).

### **Grade School and High School**

I don't have a lot to offer here. What ever I knew about your Mom relative to these years, I have forgotten. She did attend mostly Catholic schools and was I believe an average student. We have various pictures of her younger years in the album. She was a member of the Future Teachers of America while in high school. I do recall she was a great baseball fan. She described going with her dad to see the Milwaukee Braves play at County Stadium in Milwaukee. She was also a die-hard Packer backer.

### **College**

After high school, your Mom enrolled in a college in Racine, Wisconsin, a town half way between Milwaukee and Chicago. It was probably Dominican College based on a note in her senior yearbook. The problem was that your Mom did not adapt well to being a college student, and especially on an out-of-town campus. So, being as homesick as she was, she dropped out after one semester, and went back home. There she got a job at AB with the help of her brother. She lived at home and worked at AB until I married her in 1969 and took her to Texas. Your Mom never again tried to further her education, but as you will see later, she had a lot of potential that was actually never realized. She was more than happy to be a "working girl".

### **AB and the Nash Rambler**

Your Mom referred to herself as a lab assistant at AB. I'm not sure that I ever knew what they did in the lab, but I am sure she worked with chemicals in a research facility. It might have been a semiconductor research lab. She worked with a sort of "goofy" group of people and apparently had lot of fun at the job. We went to a few parties together with these people and it was obvious they really liked your Mom, they got along very well, and they liked and accepted me right off.

Some time soon after she began working there, she of course needed a car, so she bought her dad's car. This was a green Nash Rambler, early 60's vintage. Check out the picture in the album. Of course, you don't see this make of car on the road today. Back then, that car had reclining front seats, so she and I took a certain amount of ribbing about that feature of the car. We actually drove that car from Milwaukee to Houston after we were married and kept it a few years until a friend in Houston bought it for his daughter. The car had seen its better days, and as we drove to Houston, we could see the road pass below us through some holes in the floorboard. And, the alternator failed shortly after we left Peoria, and we wasted half a day getting it fixed by a garage mechanic who apparently had not replaced one of these before.

### **Jocko**

In the years before we married, your Mom had a dog: Jocko. Jocko was a miniature Schnauzer. He was a fun and energetic dog, and she was really attached to him, but we had to leave him behind as we moved to Houston. I believe he died sometime soon after we moved into our first house in Houston in 1972.

### **Ice Skating**

Your Mom was an excellent ice skater...well, not Olympic quality, but she was pretty smooth and confident on the ice. I, on the other hand, while having fairly good balance, was a very poor skater. So, as she skated smoothly on the ice, I tried very hard to keep from falling or ramming into the side of the rink, or, since we did this mostly at an outside rink, running off the ice rink completely.

### **Donny Anderson**

Donny Anderson was a famous star running back of the Packers. Donny was invited to a function of some sort at your Mom's church. I think her dad had a lot to do with setting it up. Anyway, somewhere in the album is a picture of your Mom and Donny Anderson together. Like I said, she was big sports fan, especially football and baseball.

### **How we met**

Your Mom had a lot of friends, but she tended to chum around with two in particular: Bev and Jan. They are the other two women in our wedding party photo in addition to your Aunt Kathy. I was a member of a fraternity on campus. We actually had a frat house on campus....the only frat to be so close. While we were chartered as a professional Electrical Engineering fraternity, we had our share of parties. We would have "open" parties once in a while, and the brothers who had contacts at the local women's colleges would put out the word, and women would show up to these parties. Now, how your Mom ended up here is a point I cannot recall, but she was there

along with her two close friends. I believe one of them was enrolled in one of the colleges, and so found out about the party via the “all points bulletin” put out by some of the brothers.

Our frat house had a basement which was divided into a bar area and a dance floor. Sometime during the party, I was not having any particular luck in meeting any one, and so I was upstairs along with some other guys. Your Mom and her friends were also not having much luck, and so had decided to leave. They were coming up the stairs from the bar as I and the 2 other guys were going down. One of the other brothers, who was more outgoing than I, greeted the three women and gave them the “hey you can’t leave so early” line. And so we invited them back down stairs. As we did this, I paired up with your Mom. I guess we went to the bar for some beer, and then a dance or two. Somehow, I ended up with her phone number, smooth talker that I was back then. When it was time to leave, I didn’t own a car, and so as I recall, I put her into the car of frat brother, and he took her home since he was going in that direction...not exactly the proper ending to a party pickup, but then I didn’t have much of a choice at the time.

I believe this all happened during my sophomore year in college. I can’t recall exactly, and I’m not sure I have anything to prove it, but I do recall bussing back to Milwaukee for a week during two different summers.

### **Marriage**

I asked your Mom to marry me while were dancing in the frat house basement on the evening of my graduation in May 1969. We had known each other less than 2 years. I was all of 22 years old at the time...she was 20. I had accepted a job at Texas Instruments in Dallas, and was about to move to big D. We initially set a date for the Spring of the following year (1970). Sometime after that, we decided that a long-distance romance was too hard to manage, so we changed the date to 15 November 1969. We figured that might raise a few eyebrows, but we also knew that it wouldn’t take too long to quiet the rumors. We were also taking a chance with the weather since it can be cold and snowy in November in Milwaukee.

The wedding came off without a hitch. Since I was in Dallas and then Houston 3 months later, I did very little to organize the wedding other than to pick a best man and ushers and then show up the day before. The weather cooperated fully, and we were able to get out of town (after removing rocks from the hubcaps of the rental car) and find our way to Lake Geneva where we spent our wedding night at the Lake Geneva Playboy Club and Resort. The next morning, we drove to O’Hare and flew to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands for a week.

One interesting side story: we arrived at the Playboy Club after midnight, and they had cancelled our room. I guess I didn’t pay a deposit on the room. The room rate was \$35 back then. I had visions of us having to find a motel down the road, but then the clerk, recognizing our dilemma, offered us the Lt. Governor’s suite which was available. Every once in awhile, luck stands on your side.

Another side story: We were in San Juan and St. Croix for about 3 days at each place. One night in St Croix, possibly the night before we were to leave, there was as major rain storm. We woke up to find water rushing into our ground floor room under the door. At least one suit case was

floating. The resort we stayed at was at sea level. There was maybe 2 inches of water in the room and the pool was not visible.

We flew back to Milwaukee from St. Croix, and then packed her stuff and mine into the Rambler and drove to Houston. We shipped all the wedding gifts.

We set up housekeeping in a one-bedroom apartment in Houston, with rented furniture. At that time, I owned a 1964 Pontiac Tempest and she had the Rambler. We stayed in this apartment for maybe a year, and then moved to another one less than a mile away. We felt that since most of the people in the first apartment were single, we were having a hard time getting to know anyone. The move proved good because we finally did begin to meet others.

### **The Bank**

Your Mom quickly grew bored just hanging around the apartment, so she went out job hunting. She landed a job as a teller in a local bank. She did this without any previous banking or customer service experience, which tells you something about her personality. This turned out to be a great job for her because she found it easy to meet people. It also demonstrated her hidden abilities because a few years later, she was promoted to head teller, which is a supervisor of the tellers. She also got to know a number of people working there and developed a number of lasting friendships. As a result, we seldom lacked for social activities.

The job lasted until 1974. Some time in 1973, she became pregnant with Erik. As she moved into the 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester and began to “show”, the bank decided that she should not be in the public view, so they demoted her and gave her a job in the back canceling checks. Remember, this was in the early 1970’s. This sort of thing could not happen today. As I recall, we protested this, wrote letters to the EEOC or whatever, but of course there were no results that we saw. I seem to recall that some changes occurred later at the bank, so we heard. Anyway, after Erik was born, she did not go back to work.

### **European Trip**

In about 1972, I had the opportunity to travel to Europe on business. Your Mom went along. We went to Freising, Germany. I was there two weeks. She was with me the first week, but then traveled back to Houston by herself after the first week. This trip plus our wedding trip were the only times she was ever out of the US.

### **Erik’s Birth**

Sometime in the early morning of August 24, we decided it was time to go to the hospital. She was already about 3 weeks overdue. However, the contractions stopped and the doc was thinking about sending us home. A fairly long time went by, and I think he finally decided to induce labor. We had practiced Lemase, but during labor, she got to hurting too much so she decided to have a local anesthetic. I tried hard to coach, but her pain was more than I could take, and I did leave the labor room once to regain composure. Your Mom did not handle pain or being alone very well. Anyway, Erik was finally born on 25 August 1974, in Houston.

I mentioned not liking to be alone. A few months after Erik was born, I was asked to go to California to train on a piece of computer equipment that we used at TI. This did not sit well with your Mom because she realized she would be alone with a new baby for a week. She was scared to death of that possibility. After a considerable but unsuccessful attempt at persuasion, I had to decline the trip.

### **Dave's Birth**

Dave was a different story. The process from early labor pains until birth was very fast without too many pauses. In fact, the doctor was nearly late. Nothing went according to plan, including the Lemase stuff, and Dave was born on 27 December 1977, in Austin, while my Mom and dad and Kim and Kathy and John, who were visiting for Christmas, waited at the house.

### **Moves**

While this is not necessarily a chronological biography, I will spend a few minutes describing our moves. When I transferred to Houston, before we were married, I rented an apartment. We moved to another apartment about a year after we were married. In 1972, we bought our first house in western suburban Houston, in an area called Alief. The house cost us about \$23,000, and we had a whopping \$175/month mortgage payment. Erik was born here.

In 1977, we moved to Austin. This occurred just before Dave was born. We moved here with the understanding that we would probably be in Austin only a year, and then we would transfer to the Chicago area for my job. The move happened during her pregnancy with Dave, so your Mom essentially did not have to help with the move.

After about a year in Austin, in November of 1978, we moved to Schaumburg, IL.

### **Jobs**

My job then, while not the highest paying job, was nevertheless enough for us to live on without need for your Mom to work. So, she didn't until sometime after Dave and Erik were both in grade school. While I can't recall the exact time, your Mom got a part time job as "lunch room Mom". She was paid to go down to Blackwell School at lunch time and supervise classrooms while the teachers had their lunch. Consequently, she developed a whole new set of friends that she remained very close to until her death, including the DiGregario's. She also got to know the teachers very well. I seem to recall she got some kind of honor or recognition for this job, but I can't recall the details.

That job didn't pay much, and as soon as Dave was in the first or second grade, she decided to go to work full time. She applied for and got a job in the kitchen at Schaumburg High School. It was not a glamorous job, but it provided her an income and something to do, and more importantly allowed her to be home in the late afternoon when you all came home from school. It was important to us that you not be latch-key kids. She worked at the high school until she was not able to because of the cancer. After the cancer was stabilized, they did ask her to come back, and she did work there again for awhile until the cancer came back.

Working in the lunch room of a high school is certainly not a highly skilled job, but that sort of thing did not matter to your Mom. She was more interested in earning some money and being home for you guys. The status of the job was irrelevant to her. Once again, she made a lot of friends while working there.

### **Personality**

Your Mom was an easy-going person. Very little bothered her. She accepted things pretty much as they were. She accepted her disease, but I know it scared her, too. She was not particularly opinionated. I think she just liked to live life without complications. I cannot recall her ever getting mad or upset with anyone or anything. I can't recall her ever getting mad at me, which means she had to be incredibly forgiving. She was always there to try to calm me if I would, for example, get mad at you all.

She had lots of friends. This was probably attributed the fact that she was not self-centered, but rather always concerned about the other person. This was a genuine trait, and it was very obvious that she got this from her parents. Most of these friendships were gained through school activities and of course the neighborhood. Most of these friends became our friends and most of these friends had kids that you all grew up with in Schaumburg. She found it easy to meet others, and others found it easy to be her friend. When she died, this was quite evident, since there were many, many people in attendance at the visitation and funeral.

### **Cancer**

I'm going to tell you as much as I can recall about the disease that took your Mom away, and the valiant fight that she put up to conquer it. Some of this is not pleasant, but you should know about it.

Sometime in the summer of 1986 your Mom started having back pain. It was in her lower back, but we could not come up with any thing that she may have done to provoke it. We consulted a doctor, and ultimately she began to see a physical therapist because it was suspected that this might help remedy the problem.

The problem had been more of nuisance than anything else, but one weekend we all went to Milwaukee so she could attend her 20 year high school reunion. We dropped you both off at your grandpa's trailer on the lake and went in to town to attend the reunion. Her pain escalated that day, and we decided to forego the reunion, so we came back to the lake, picked you up, and went back to Schaumburg. That's when we consulted the therapist.

Some weeks later, everything began to unravel. I was at work, your Mom was home, you all were out and about in the neighborhood. According to your Mom's description, she was in the bedroom, and sneezed fairly hard. She immediately felt an excruciating pain in her back, so great that she sat down on the floor and rolled onto her back to get some relief, and stayed there, unable or unwilling to move.

Dave came home some time later and found her. Your Mom told Dave to go get Mary Schmidt, which he did. She called me at work, and I came home. Your Mom absolutely refused to move,

so she remained on the floor all night long, and sometime early the next morning, I convinced her to try to move on to the bed. With great difficulty, I got her up onto the bed. We called the doctor. Over the next day, the situation did not improve, and so I convinced the doctor she should be in the hospital.

I was able to get her to her feet, and carefully she was able to walk down the two short flights of stairs in our house and into the car. At the hospital, they placed her on a stretcher and wheeled her in.

The next few days are a little fuzzy but they put her thru a series of tests, mostly CT scans, in order to try to find the cause of the pain. The doctors also ordered a mammogram. This test was done more or less later in the process after maybe 5 -7 days, but it told the story. A very small lump was found. They showed me the x-ray, and the lump was barely detectable. Later the surgeon who removed it described it as the size of his finger nail. He said he had a very difficult time finding it with a manual exam, and that your Mom would probably not have found it with a self exam. Since she was only 37 years old, there was no reason to have routine mammograms.

He also expressed amazement that this cancer was this severe in a woman her age. The cancer was later described to me as being very aggressive, which cancers tend to be in younger women.

We were extremely surprised to hear that there was a lump and devastated to hear the surgeon who removed it tell us that it was malignant. There was no history of this sort of thing in her family. Your Mom was a little over weight at this time, but certainly not obese, and obesity has been known to be a contributing factor in breast cancer development. So have other factors.

The oncology surgeon was Greek or Turkish, I'm not sure which. He was a very nice guy, and caring. But nothing could help when he told me in the hallway after the surgery that preliminary tests showed the lump to be malignant. It was by far the most devastating thing I had ever heard in my life up until then.

The surgeon performed a lumpectomy. That means the lump is removed, but the breast is left. I believe this was done because of her young age and because of the disfigurement that would occur.

We were put in touch with an oncologist. She was relatively young, and this concerned me a little, but she was part of a team of doctors, the others of which were highly experienced. We heard others praise this team, so we felt we were in good hands.

While still in the hospital, and while still having the back pain, your Mom began a heavy regimen of chemotherapy and radiation treatment. The chemo treatment was heavy, and she slept most of the time after the injections. The radiation treatments were actually performed at another hospital, so once per day for maybe 2 weeks she had to go by ambulance to the other hospital. That was very uncomfortable for her because of the back pain, and the effects of the chemo. The doctors chose to do it this way because the hospital where she stayed was near our home, and they felt, and I agreed, that it was best if she was closer.

It was now apparent that the cancer had moved to her back. It seems to be common that breast cancer metastasizes to the backbone and to the liver. In this case, it had moved to the back, and had actually destroyed a little of one of her lower back vertebrae, thus causing the jagged damaged bone to rub on nerves, thus causing the back pain. This was clear on the x-rays. Nevertheless, her back pain subsided, and she slowly began to regain strength as the drugs and the radiation began to do some good.

Nineteen days after the ordeal started, she was back home.

Those first weeks at home were a time of recovery. We still had to visit the hospital periodically for radiation treatments and chemotherapy. The doctors chose a plan to inject some fairly strong drugs every 2 or 3 weeks. That was the good news. The bad news was that the side effects were severe, including vomiting, and an almost 24-hour sleep. Actually, sleep was the best thing for her because of the sickness. After about 2 days she was sufficiently recovered to be up and about, but that was some what limited. I was the chief cook and bottle washer, laundry doer, and house maid. It was a busy time, but she was home with us, and that was very important for all of our well-being.

In retrospect, we didn't talk much about this situation we were in. I truly believe now that we made a decision that this cancer would be beaten, and that it was just a matter of time. We therefore set about the task of fighting it with the various drugs administered by the doctors and tried to make our family life as normal as we could. The more we got into a routine and the more we were positive about it, the better we all felt, I'm sure. And, I was convinced that a positive mental attitude about it was not only critical but was instrumental in her one-year survival. Consequently, you all were never part of any family discussion about your mother's health. Some will say this was a mistake, and it probably was, but that's the way we handled it at the time.

Over the next few months, as we moved towards Christmas, things got pretty active at school. I had to do all the school enrollments, etc. Soccer and basketball started, and as you may recall, your Mom tried to be at as many games as she could. I can, and I hope you can too, recall her attending your soccer games and basketball games that winter. This was a difficult thing to do because the drug treatments reduced her stamina, and made her more susceptible to infections, etc.

A few months into this, you may recall, she began to lose hair. That is one of the effects of the drugs. That problem was resolved by the purchase of a wig. We all seemed to accept this wig as part of the situation. She looked like she had just come back from the hairdresser each day.

Early, I described the severity of the drugs she was taking. The doctors later changed drugs and went to a less potent series of drugs, but administered more frequently, like once per week. This helped limit the amount of sickness she would experience. But still, when we went to the doctor's office for the drug injection, we took a bucket just in case she would get sick on the way home, which she did a number of times.

Chemotherapy drugs are very potent. In the beginning, they simply injected this stuff into her arm. This got to be a problem later because of the number of needle marks, and because if this stuff would leak onto the skin, I'm told, it would eat away the skin. The doctors recommended a catheter (tube) be inserted into her artery. So one day we found ourselves at the hospital getting her "plumbing", as I called it, installed. It was a tube that was inserted into an incision in her lower neck, and into a main artery. About 12 inches of tubing stuck out. Then, when she would get a drug injection, they would simply insert the needle into the tube end. Once a week or so, I had to flush the tube. I would inject a saline solution into the tube with a syringe to clean it. She said she would feel a cool rush as the room temperature solution was injected.

During the time frame between Christmas and the summer, life was somewhat normal around the house. We had to make weekly trips to the doctor's office, but otherwise, things were somewhat uneventful, so much in fact that I cannot recall any particularly significant events, good or bad.

Sometime later in this time frame, things took a turn for the worse. The cancer seemed to rear its ugly head again. Looking back on this time frame, your Mom began a very slow decline. The cancer had also metastasized to her liver, and the doctors were constantly watching the spots in her x-rays to see how the liver was doing. They began to administer a slow drip chemotherapy treatment. I would take her to the doctor's office in the morning, and she would stay there mostly all day as they slowly dripped a drug into her via the tube. It was probably pretty boring to her to just sit there. I recall there were some additional radiation treatments during this time. Unfortunately, nothing was working and they told us that the body can become immune to drugs if administered long enough. In addition, the cancer was slowly moving to other organs and this was causing these organs to slowly shut down.

Your Mom weakened to the point later in the summer that she ended up in bed more than she was out. This created more and more problems for us in terms of being able to do things. You all were in baseball and going to games or to the team party was a chore. For a while, it was possible to leave her for short periods of time, but as she weakened, this became more and more difficult. At one time, your grandparents Flagge came and stayed with her for weekend while we all went to Lexington, IL for a baseball tournament. I was criticized by them for leaving her for these 2 days, but later I realized that is was something I needed to do. Under these circumstances, we needed to have a break once in awhile.

Your Mom continued to weaken, and when she had to go in for treatment, we needed a wheelchair at the doctor's office to get her in and out. In late July, the situation became critical, and in her very weakened state, she could not get out of bed. Sometime around Aug 1, after I had a very difficult time getting her into the bathroom and back again,

(I will spare you the details here but suffice it to say she was totally dependent on me, much like a baby is.) I called the doctor, and we decided that she needed to be in the hospital. I could no longer care for her at home. We wanted her to remain at home, but the reality was that it was just not feasible. Today, we might have used hospice care, but then I didn't know of such a thing, or else we ruled it out for some reason. I will never forget that day a few days after we readmitted

her, when the oncologist called me at work to inform that that your Mom's situation was terminal. We had worked and wished so hard that this would never happen, and then in one phone call, that wish was destroyed. I guess, though, that I knew it deep down inside.

All of your grandparents came to Schaumburg and stayed at our house and we all began the process of waiting for the end to come. Your Mom was in a comatose state, and while the doctors told us she was terminal, there was no way to know if this would last a few days or a few weeks. She was still fighting and holding on to life as long as she could. This created some intense tensions and stresses within the family, and it caused a major explosion to occur between your grandparents Flagge and me. This time frame seemed endless as we waited for the inevitable to occur.

Early in the morning of 9 August 1987, the nurse called me to tell me she was slipping fast, so I left you both home with your Aunt Kim and hurried to the hospital. Your grandparents had finally decided to take a break and go home for a few days. By the time I arrived at the hospital, your Mom had passed away. I came home to get you, and we all went back to the hospital to say goodbye.

It is interesting to note that during those last days, I firmly believe your Mom was aware of what was going on around her but couldn't talk. When I would feed her crushed ice, it was apparent that she could taste the coolness and was aware that I was doing this. Also, it was interesting to watch her reaction as you all entered the room. She would become excited that you were there but could not express herself other than thru a few noises or groans. I would refer to her during this time as being comatose, but I think she knew what was going on around her and she could recognize us, but she could not communicate.

I must write a little about one particular nurse that cared for your Mom. I believe her name was Jan. This particular nurse had a way about her that made your Mom's stays at the hospital just a little easier to deal with. Not only was she competent at doing the medical part of the job, but she was extremely competent at doing the human part of the job.

One day very late in this scenario, she told me that it was her understanding that the doctors viewed your Mom's cancer as terminal from the outset, and that the doctors had chosen not to tell us. I don't know how I took this at that instant in time, and I'm not sure today how accurate that is, but I rationalized later that it may have been best for them not to share that with us. Your Mom survived her cancer for exactly one year. It is quite possible that this time may have been shortened had we not had the hope and positive attitude that we had during the time. I don't really know of course...just a feeling.

### **The Funeral**

Your grandparents Flagge had a cemetery plot in Milwaukee. It was of course for them, but it was big enough for multiple people, I guess like a family plot. They offered to have your Mom buried there. Other than the fact that she was their daughter, they were also concerned that if I was transferred, and she was buried in Schaumburg, there would be no one to look after the grave. It turned out to be a good decision.

As a result of this, we had two services. First, there was the visitation and church service in Schaumburg. If you didn't know how many friends your Mom had, it was demonstrated at the visitation and service that she had many. So many people showed up to pay respects...more people that I ever imagined.

After the church service in Schaumburg, we had to take her in a motorcade to Milwaukee to the cemetery there for a second graveside service. There, even more family and friends came to the service.

I have to say here that you both were very strong in dealing with this. Dave was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, Erik in 8th grade. Clearly, you both had never before been exposed to the reality of death. My grandmother Filippini and my cousin Wayne had died earlier (can't recall your ages) but that was a fairly remote experience for you, even though you were at the funerals.

### **Cemetery location**

Your Mom is buried in St. Adalbert's Cemetery in Milwaukee (aka Holy Trinity Cemetery). It is located on South 13<sup>th</sup> St a few blocks North of Oklahoma Ave. I have included a map in the album. She is buried next to her Mom and dad, one uncle, and her Flagge grandparents. Her brother John, his wife Mary, and her niece Karen are buried elsewhere in the same cemetery.

### **After the Funeral**

About a week after the funeral, your Aunt Kathy suggested we come to Florida for a while, so we flew down to visit them for about a week. It was good to get away from the house for a while and begin to heal.

A pretty amazing thing happened after we came back. Our neighbors got together and decided to cook us meals. About 8 to 10 of our closer friends organized a feeding schedule and for some months after your Mom died, they presented us with previously prepared evening meals with all the trimmings. We got these meals about 2 or 3 times per week. There was usually enough food that we were pretty much set for the week, but I had to cook on the weekends. They finally stopped doing this maybe around Thanksgiving or Christmas, but it was so helpful to us at that time.

### **Conclusion**

I hope you have gained a little more understanding about your Mom by reading this simple biography. More importantly, I hope this album helps you to always retain fond memories of her. Remember her always, in happiness, not sorrow.

*Your Dad*