

LEAVING BEHIND A LEGACY

Mary's mother died in 2010,
Mary's 60-year-old husband David died in 2012,
and Mary's 8-year-old grandson died in 2013.

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I was with Mom in the doctor's office on October 23, when the doctor informed her that recent tests indicated she has lung cancer that spread to her brain. Her only response was a quiet "So this is what it will be. I wondered what I would die from."

When she meets with the oncologist,
her main concern is for her children
she'll leave behind.

A decision is made to treat her with radiation to her brain to slow the growth of the cancer.

Mom's bucket list includes a ride in a small airplane. My sisters arranged for that to happen. Before she got in the cockpit, Mom turns and, with a light in her eyes and a broad grin, she states "Wouldn't it be something if this is the way I went?"

Our family rallies around Mom, with several siblings accompanying her to appointments. The nurse at the doctor's office comments that we look like the mafia, surrounding her on all sides.

The regimen of radiation begins. Sisters and nieces spend many evenings at Mom's home, listening to her stories.

We enjoyed a family gathering at a restaurant to show our support and get a glimpse of the large painting Mom did that hangs in their entry.

Bald, beautiful, and brave, our mother was eager to regain her energy so she could sort through her things, paint a few more paintings, and live what is left of her life to the fullest.

There will be no sorting, painting, or projects.

Soon after, my sister found Mom disoriented and going downhill fast. Even as her condition deteriorated, my mother's kind smile and loving eyes spoke volumes.

Mom received the Last Rites at 1 p.m. that afternoon. Afterward, my brother and son carried Mom from a chair to the bed. She closed her eyes and didn't open them again on this side of eternity.

Our family held vigils around our mother's bed. We were humbled to care for this beautiful woman in her final hours.

Irma Rose Potter died on my birthday. What she leaves behind is a legacy of faith, art, and treasures in the form of her paintings, quilts, woodcarvings, and notebooks full of her words.