



Bonnie Hay's story of

# Anne



My Mother was 37 years old when she died on Friday July 13, 1973. That makes her birth year 1936. I do not know the birth month, it has been so long and I was so young when she passed.

She was born in Saskatchewan, to Ukrainian immigrants.

She had three older brothers and being the youngest, and only girl, welcomed and, I'm sure, spoiled.

She married in the late 50's and gave birth to me in 1962. I know a very joyous event to her! She had a job as a secretary during our time in Saskatoon. After work she would pick me up from the babysitter, sporting the very in 60's beehive.

I don't know when exactly, but at one point after my birth, she was diagnosed with either cervical or ovarian cancer. She ended up having a hysterectomy and therefore only one child, or so I thought. Just a few years ago, I found out that before having me, she actually gave birth to a baby boy, 2 months prematurely and obviously, he did not live.

My Father was a salesman for a major food company and was transferred around a lot.

They lived in Saskatoon, where I was born, and a few years later, 1967, we moved to Vancouver. That didn't last long and around 1968 we were living in Winnipeg. A memory of her here was when she worked at a hospital in Winnipeg as a receptionist. Those were the days where the switchboard looked like the one Lily Tomlin uses when playing her "one ringy dinky" character. I remember her having lots of friends and loved visiting the hospital to watch her work the phones.

My parents both left for work early in the mornings. My Mother would be at work and phone me when it was time for me to wake up. She would then tell me to "go brush your teeth". I would then get back on the phone. "Now go get dressed". I knew what to do of course but it was our morning ritual. Then when I would get home from school I would phone her and she would give me instructions on how to prep dinner. "Put water in the big pot and peel 6 potatoes" etc. I certainly felt less alone with our phone ritual.

Her life with my Father, however, was not good and they fought often. Many nights I was more of a Mother to her, as she would often cry on my lap or in my arms. This was what life was like living with an alcoholic husband who cheated often.

I know that a few times she packed me up and we drove to stay with her parents who lived in Regina. This is when I got to see her Ukrainian roots mostly by way of food though she did speak Ukrainian and would translate what her Mother was saying. Her Father knew a bit more English and could get by. My Grandmother had a huge garden, so all the veggies were fresh and the raspberries were spectacular. My Grandfather and I would pick peas, always having to pick double what my Grandmother would make, since he and I would eat one pod to every two we would shell.

The best food though was the perogies. Hence, my Mother having a battle with her weight and being on Weight Watchers at one point, and I having what I lovingly refer to as my perogy thighs.

In 1972, my Father was transferred and we once again packed up and went to Oakville, Ontario. I believe that every time they moved, she was hoping for a new beginning, or a least a happier one.

When we moved to Oakville, she was diagnosed with cancer again. The medical team didn't "cure" it the first time, and it had spread. There was nothing they could do; the cancer had spread to her lungs and brain.

That Christmas she gave me a cat, one that followed her more than me. Shortly afterwards she was admitted to the hospital. She looked fabulous, in a black dress. She sat down on the bed and said not to worry, that she'd be out soon. When my Father would take me to visit her I would act up and sometimes not talk and just pout. She turned to my Father and said I didn't have to come there anymore if I didn't want to. That broke my heart. I just didn't know how to tell her how scared I was. I knew she was dying.

The last several months of her life were spent in and out of the hospital. Basically when she was somewhat stable, they would send her home so that they could give her bed to someone else until she needed to go back again. One time when we went to visit we discovered that she and her "roommate" had a craving for Chinese food. Unbeknownst to the nurses, they ordered and had it delivered. By the time it got there, they no longer wanted it, and also didn't have any money to pay for it. Good thing my Father had enough money that night to pay the nurses back!

I was always excited to see the ambulance pull up to our apartment building knowing she wouldn't have to be in that awful hospital room. I loved having my Mom home.

She wouldn't wear a wig as it would irritate her sensitive skin and only wore kerchiefs. Her smell was heightened and eating peanut butter on a teaspoon around her was now a no no.

I, as a ten year old, had to help her get to the bathroom with the aid of her walker and sit her down on the toilet. Then I would turn the tap on to help her "go". Then she would always ask me to leave and close the door. She still needed to feel some dignity.

Her last few months were spent in the hospital. My father decided to send me to live with my Grandparents, his parents. She was no longer recognizing people. She was also extremely thin.

The last time I saw her, she thought my Dad was her brother, and then she looked at me. She said my name. She knew me. I will cherish that forever.