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Making Lemonade From Lemons

By Yvette Taylor



Trying to find the good in the bad is always difficult for those who have a neuroendocrine immune disorder. Sometimes just walking to the mailbox is a good day. It is very hard to have a positive attitude when you are figuratively tied to your bed; if you go out one day and are in bed for the next two; when you are feeling OK and go grocery shopping, only to be attacked by flying knives and having to leave the groceries; being stared at when you use your handicap sticker and don't look sick. I have frequently told nosy strangers that I would love to give them my handicap sticker if they could take my pain away.

We are now in especially hard times; economic upheavals are hitting everyone. Those not personally affected know others who are. Watching the news recently and seeing an older middle-class couple living in their car and not telling their grown children was horrifying. I've been affected by a 27-year-old son who lost his job in December and is standing among hundreds of applicants for ANY

job. He actually was willing to wash dishes at an IHOP, but the restaurant decided not to fill the vacant job. Instead, they added more work for the employees already there, with no additional salary. I'm having a bit of trouble making lemonade out of this one, but I am fortunate to have a job myself and can help him out. I'm sure each of us has a story.

On top of the economic problems in this country, PANDORA has suffered great losses. Marla Silverman's beautiful mother Zuzu died quite suddenly. Despite taking her Mom to several doctors, being a devoted daughter on a daily basis throughout Zuzu's entire life and being by her side during numerous hospital stays, Marly was horrified when she refused to leave the hospital without a diagnosis and was told that Zuzu had Stage IV metastatic cancer! NONE of the doctors had ever mentioned the word before – How shocking!

On Feb. 19th, Marly made arrangements for a hospital bed and Hospice and took her mother home. Zuzu passed away at 6:50 am the next day in her own bed. Her memorial was sad yet uplifting. She obviously meant the world to her family. One of her grandsons made some lemonade for me. Phillip was deeply affected by the loss of his grandmother; but he told me he was almost glad he didn't know how sick she was. If he had known, Christmas would have been the last Christmas; New Year's Day, the last New Year's Day. He beautifully expressed how glad he was that the family was able to enjoy those holidays without the specter of "the last." Zuzu will be missed by all who knew her, including myself.

My favorite Zuzu moment was when several PANDORA members were joining Marly for lunch. We waited and waited, but no Marly and Zuzu. When they finally arrived, Marly told us that Zuzu did not want to miss her Meals on Wheels. She refused to leave for lunch despite Marly's assurances that she would leave a cooler and note by the door, and the food would be fine. Zuzu was much happier at her late arrival for lunch than was her daughter! Now we know where Marly got her strength and "never give up" attitude.

Dr. Steven Croft, the most beloved physician I have ever known of and a great cheerleader for PANDORA, died the same week as Zuzu of an inoperable brain tumor he fought for 17 months. Although he was not my doctor, I attended his funeral with one of his devoted patients and my friend, Nancy Villard, who was overwrought with pain. I learned something at that funeral. There were many eulogies playing to a packed synagogue. As I listened, it was apparent that Dr. Croft was the one who was comforting his family and friends rather than the other way around. Close to his death and in an ICU unit, Dr. Croft wanted to have a party. The hospital allowed it. By this time, he had lost control of his body, except for his right arm. He could barely speak. His childhood friend told us that Steven Croft was waving his right arm in a gesture indicating that he wanted his friend to come to him, which he immediately did, putting his ear close so he could hear the words of wisdom he thought Dr. Croft would utter. Instead, he said, "I'd like a jelly bean." In his 56 years on earth, he was beloved by everyone who knew him.

A couple of years ago, I was reunited with a high school friend after 40 years! We were able to pick up right where we left off. Susan has multiple sclerosis and recently lost her job. Our conversations every week have loads of bad news. We decided that one of us had to come up with something funny to end each conversation--providing a bit of lemonade. We try to have this be something that actually happened to us, but my contribution this week was a joke I heard. I NEVER remember jokes, but I really liked this one:

Eight-year-old Rachel was always full of questions. One day she said, "Mom, where did I come from?" Her mother took a deep breath and slowly started the dreaded birds and bees tale. "No, Mom," Rachel said as she stopped her mother. "I mean ALL people. Where did *people* come from?" Sighing with relief, her mother told her about Adam and Eve, how they had children, who then had other children, and they had other children until the earth was populated by millions of people [all related

Rachel considered this response, but she wasn't sure about it, so she asked her father, "Where do people come from?" He responded, "First there were dinosaurs and many other animals. There was the gorilla, then the chimp, then monkeys, and, finally, people.

Alarmed, Rachel returned to her mother. “You said we came from Adam and Eve. Daddy said we came from monkeys.” Mom quickly replied, “That’s only your father’s side of the family.”

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