



2007: THE FLYNN FAMILY YEAR IN REVIEW

by Chantal Flynn

“Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

-Revelation 21:3-4

For the first time since our inaugural Christmas newsletter of 1995 I'm writing this in the first person, because, well, it's been a very personal year. It's been a year filled with tremendous loss, but also a year filled with hope and, most importantly, with love.

As many of you know, my Mama, Joani Giguere, passed away on April 16. She was diagnosed with cervical cancer last year, and endured 11 months of treatments, procedures, tests, hospitalizations, pain and an overall deterioration in her health and quality of life. She had been hospitalized most recently in March, and was transferred to CCU on April 9 when her condition worsened. She was diagnosed with pneumonia in both lungs and a severe staph infection, and was put on a ventilator and sedated in order to be kept comfortable. I immediately flew out to Palm Springs to be with her on a one-way ticket, leaving Carl and Logan in Waco. I was with her for nearly every minute of CCU visiting hours, sitting at her bedside and holding her hand. During those days, I became the Mommy and she became my baby that I had to take care of. Additional tests revealed that she also had a blood condition described as pre-leukemia. The combination of all of her illnesses was simply too much for her body, and it quickly became apparent that it was only a matter of time. Carl and Logan flew out on April 15, and together we made the decision to take Mama off of the ventilator in accordance with her wishes. It was removed later that same day, and Mama passed away the following night. Carl was at my side, along with Mama's minister and two of her dear friends. She was comfortable throughout, and free of any suffering or pain. A memorial service celebrating Mama's life was held on April 29 in Palm Springs, and I was especially blessed by having Carl's entire family attend.

As I look back over the last week of Mama's life, I continue to be touched by many things. Although it was the hardest, most exhausting week of my life, it wasn't necessarily the worst week of my life. I felt completely surrounded by love—love for my mother, the love of family and friends, and most importantly the love of God. I will never, ever be able to adequately thank our friends in Waco who helped to take care of Logan (and Carl) while I was gone, or our friends and family who got in their cars (and in the case of my life-long best friend from Michigan, Jenni, on a plane) and came to be with us in Palm Springs. And there were moments I'll treasure forever...the numerous times I sang “The Lord Bless You and Keep You” to Mama; Mama mouthing “I love you” to me; her wonderful nurse helping me give Mama a big hug (maneuvering me around the ventilator tubes and IVs) so that I could rest in her embrace one last time; the same nurse arranging for Logan to talk to his Grand-Mama via cell phone (even though cell phones weren't allowed)...what precious memories. So it is the love and the tender moments I've taken away from that time, and the knowledge that Mama is finally at peace, resting in the eternal embrace of her Lord.

The three of us went on a six-week odyssey this summer, spending four of the weeks in Palm Springs cleaning out Mama's house. It was an archeological dig. Mama saved 72 years worth of everything. We sorted through what to keep, and what to get ready for an estate sale, and ultimately worked toward getting the house ready to sell. Once again, friends and family came and helped, and we absolutely couldn't have done it without them. Carl's dad graciously drove a U-Haul truck from Palm Springs to Waco with the things we were keeping. The estate sale folks did three consecutive, three-day weekends of estate sales because there was so much stuff. Mama's house went up for sale at the end of September, and, at press time, was still on the market. In the middle of our six-week odyssey we went on a long-planned Flynn family trip to Hawaii. Carl's dad and stepmom both retired this year (we flew out to California and surprised Dad at his retirement party in March—it was fun!), and celebrated by taking 16 of us to Oahu for a week. It was a fantastic trip. Before and after the Hawaii trip we visited at Pepperdine, staying with dear friends Dave and Angie Lemley, and saw many friends we hadn't seen since we moved a year ago.

In addition to Mama, I've also lost two great aunts, a great uncle and a cousin this year. Carl and I also had a miscarriage in August. It was early in the pregnancy (7 weeks), but I still managed to sob myself to sleep for three nights. It served as one more addition to the loss that we've suffered this year. However, the Lord is blessing us with another pregnancy, and our new Baby Flynn is due to arrive sometime around July 4. We've already seen his/her pulsating heartbeat on ultrasounds, and we look forward to this precious little one joining our family.

Although Mama's death and its surrounding details have consumed most of our time, energy and emotions this year, there are other things to report. We had a freak snow storm the day before Easter, which blanketed everything with the white stuff. It only lasted the day, but we enjoyed getting out in it. We attended the Heart of Texas Fair in October, and Logan enjoyed seeing all kinds of farm animals and getting a horseback ride. In November we attended a Dallas Stars hockey game in celebration of the birthday of one of Carl's co-workers, Will Telfer, and Carl traveled to San Antonio with our good friend Brent Gibson to watch a Spurs basketball game, as part of Brent's birthday celebration. Also in November, we had a water leak that flooded parts of our living room and kitchen, so we're in the process of having our flooring replaced. Our Pepperdine friend Justin Schneider attends law school here at Baylor, and we've kind-of adopted him. We hang out together from time to time, and make sure that he eats and does his laundry.

Logan continues to be the best thing I've ever done. He successfully climbed out of his crib at the end of January (without injury), so we transitioned him to a "bigger boy" twin bed, and transformed his Classic Pooh nursery into a Mickey Mouse-themed room. He turned two on June 8, and was very easy-going during our travel odyssey this summer. He dressed up as Lightning McQueen (from the movie "Cars") for Halloween. He is a delight, and we are continually amazed at his growth and development. He talks up a storm, and is very imaginative in his play. He attends a Mother's Day Out program (we call it "school") at our church two days a week and enjoys it. Our kitchen is now an ever-changing gallery showcasing Logan's arts & crafts masterpieces. Logan's hobbies and special interests include Daddy, construction trucks, tractors, trains, his stuffed Puppy, music, books, floor puzzles, animals, "Cars", "Veggie Tales", "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood", basketball, golf, football, playing with friends, going to the museum and the zoo, playing in his sandbox, 4th of July fireworks, picking up Daddy from work at "The Baylor", building with blocks, shaving with Daddy, playing the piano, playing with Play-Doh and watching squirrels in our backyard.

Carl is in his second year at Baylor as an Information Technology Specialist, responsible for the "PawPrints" student printing network, configuring and supporting Apple computers across campus, and creating marketing/publicity campaigns for Baylor's Electronic Library and Information Technology Services departments. He built Logan a beautiful bookcase for his room and is in the process of finishing another set of shelves for our office that he built with his Dad. Carl spends his free time on house projects, but finds time to play basketball a couple of times a week on campus and volleyball on a YMCA team. Carl also enjoys teaching on Wednesday nights and on other occasions at Crestview Church of Christ. His greatest joy; however, is being "Daddy".

As for me, I enjoy my role as Logan's caretaker and Flynn Family Domestic Manager. While Logan is at Mother's Day Out, I focus my time and energy on cleaning our house and working on projects (mostly going through various boxes in an attempt to clear out the clutter). I continue to go through the grieving process and heartache of Mama being gone, and look forward to our reunion when this life is over. Favorite moments from the past year include sitting at Mama's bedside during the last week of her life; snorkeling at Hanauma Bay; watching Logan play in the sand at the beach; one of our friends finding my wedding shoes (missing since 1992) while cleaning out Mama's house and Carl finding family wedding rings (long-thought lost/stolen) in a box labeled "Misc. Basement"; hearing Logan say "Thank you so much!", "No thank you", "Want to snuggle" and "No more kisses!"

On December 12, 2007, Carl and I will celebrate 15 years of marriage. We cannot believe that 15 years passed so quickly. It seems like just yesterday that we walked down the aisle and started our lives together. We are thankful that we have one another to lean on throughout the ups and downs of life's journey, and look forward to the next 15 years (and more) with gladness.

We will spend Christmas with Carl's family on both sides of Lake Havasu, but will be back in Waco in time to welcome 2008. We look forward to the blessings and challenges that the new year will bring. May God bless you and your family in the coming year!

