

Putts and Guts

Category: Guts

written by R. Lynn Barnett | April 2, 2026

My mom spearheaded a move for her and my dad from New York to Florida, because northern winters were getting too uncomfortable. My mom looked forward to warmer winters and year-round golfing.

Their friends said it took guts for them to move, because they'd be leaving their core group of friends and family. My dad was initially reluctant to move because of this reality, but my mom's persistence prevailed and move they did.

They liked the weather, which was indeed conducive to year-round golf. For my mom especially, golf was like gold. She joined a ladies' golf league and enjoyed the camaraderie, the fresh air, and the exercise.

But golf, like life, has its challenges. Sometimes a golf drive looks good, until it lands in the water. Or lands in the rough. Life can have rough spots, too, and it takes guts to navigate them with as much grace as you can muster. That means not throwing your clubs in the water on the golf course, and not throwing in the towel in life.

Some years ago, my mom had a lumpectomy—on April Fool's Day. I asked her if she wasn't nervous having it on that day, and she said, "I'll fool them all. I'll survive." And she did. She not only survived, but thrived. A few years later, she got her first and only hole-in-one on the golf course. Although she was proud of her accomplishment, she didn't brag about it: par for the course for her.

Before she was diagnosed with colon cancer for the second time, she told me she'd learned to trust her gut about gut discomfort. She had colon cancer of the ascending colon. It took guts to face that diagnosis head-on. When she went in for surgery, her surgeon told me that he was going to get my mom back on the links. I told him I'd be happy if he got her off the exam table, and he said, "I can do better than that for your mom." Which he did.

Cancer didn't define my mom's life. When I called to see how she was doing after radiation, she said, "I had radiation early this morning, then I played golf, then we had brunch, then I took Daddy to his doctor's appointment."

It took guts for her to view cancer and its treatment as an integral part of her life, rather than the whole of it. Maybe I should have titled this story "No Guts, No Glory."

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