

# The Warrior

Category: Making Assumptions

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | August 1, 2019

When I first met my future sister-in-law—I was fifteen, she was seventeen—I assumed that her life was perfect. She was pretty, perky and popular—everything I was not. She was dating my brother, a medical school student, while I had never been on a date. I just knew her life would be a fairy tale with a happily-ever-after ending.

Even after she was diagnosed with Crohn's disease, my assumptions about her did not change. I believed that she would deal with this heinous, potentially deadly disease in a positive way, and, initially, I was correct. She marched down the aisle, dazzling in her white gown, and she gave birth to a beautiful daughter, my only niece. She developed her talent as an artist—one whose work brought to mind the great masters like Rembrandt and Van Gogh.

Then, flare-ups occurred, surgeries happened and Crohn's began to take over. When she and my brother eventually divorced, I assumed her life would come to a standstill. Instead, she painted more and had art shows; she dated and traveled; she started and headed an organization that focused on Crohn's and the research needed to cure this disease. She thrived.

Crohn's accompanied her throughout her life, but she refused to let it diminish her life. She raised her daughter to be an optimist—a young woman who embraces each day as one of possibility. She gave hugs, kisses and love to her young granddaughter. And when she died January 5, 2016, at age seventy, from complications of Crohn's disease, she left a legacy of hope and strength to all of us privileged to know her.

My sister-in-law taught me the error in making assumptions—whether those assumptions are based on physical appearance or on a disease that intrudes upon one's life. She taught me that people are more than who others assume they are. She did not ask Crohn's to enter her life, but she also did not give up her life to Crohn's. I assumed that each year of enduring Crohn's would deplete her, but my assumption was wrong. She was a warrior until the end—defying all assumptions to the contrary.

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