

Cathy's Story...

Let me tell you about Cathy. She was a typical Jersey Girl, funny, kind and caring but with an attitude and mouth to back it up. She was married at 18 to the love of her life Marc, and had two son's with him. She lost her husband after fourteen short but happy years of marriage to a tragic homicide. She never re-married nor did she date. She continued to be a devoted mother and raised her children into loving good men.

When her grandson was born in 2005, Cathy relocated to Nevada to live with her oldest son and his family. Her son had lived in Nevada for almost six years and noticed a change in his mom as soon as she arrived. The twinkle in her eyes had faded and she seemed constantly depressed. Family discussions of the past weren't so easy for her. Her memory seemed to be failing and she complained of headaches and weakness.

On March 8, 2006 Cathy suffered a stroke. Once we were in the hospital she told us that she had "white matter disease", which we had no idea what that was and why on earth we hadn't been told about it before. So the research began and come to find out there are a lot of illnesses with the related term "white matter"...upon further research of old medical records, we find out Cathy has CADASIL. We rush to the hospital with the records, show them to the neurologist and he tells us we are wrong. Cathy has MS!? Upon Cathy failing all other MS tests, the doctor finally agrees on the CADASIL diagnosis and does nothing but sign her discharge papers. He told us that day that in his 30+ years of neurology he had never seen a brain scan that looked as bad as Cathy's.

His actions that day left us with little hope.

Once we left the hospital Cathy told us that she knew she had CADASIL for about four years, and that her symptoms began when she was around 24 years of age. She failed to tell us because she didn't want us to worry.

She has had three other strokes since May of 2006.

Cathy now believes there is very little to be done for her. But we, her family know that isn't true. We constantly remind her that things are being done everyday to research this disease. We try to keep her hopeful. Cathy went back to Jersey to be with her sister, also a CADASIL sufferer.

Cathy's story is unique. Cathy is a daughter, a sister, a mother and a grandmother. She has been through more in her 54 years than most go through in a lifetime. My prayer for Cathy and everyone else who suffers from CADASIL is that there will be a cure in the near future so that they can regain somewhat of a normal life.