

Choosing

The past week has been a blur. My mom had her last journey in life - and even in this she taught me new lessons.

Mom finally got to the point that she just wanted everything to stop when she was in the hospital - the IVs, the poking for blood, all of it. She was very clear about this - both her nurse and the chaplain remarked on this. My mom has been the comeback kid through so many things - that when the time came for her to choose, it was brave and totally in character for her to make this decision.

I have to say, that moment was pretty devastating to live through as her daughter. My mom and I have been pretty close over the past few years, and while I never thought to challenge her decision, it was a moment when I knew the end was closer than I wanted it to be for her.

Hospitals today make all of this far easier to handle than they used to - and the nurses and everyone could not have been sweeter - one of her nurses even came up to see us when she went off her shift.

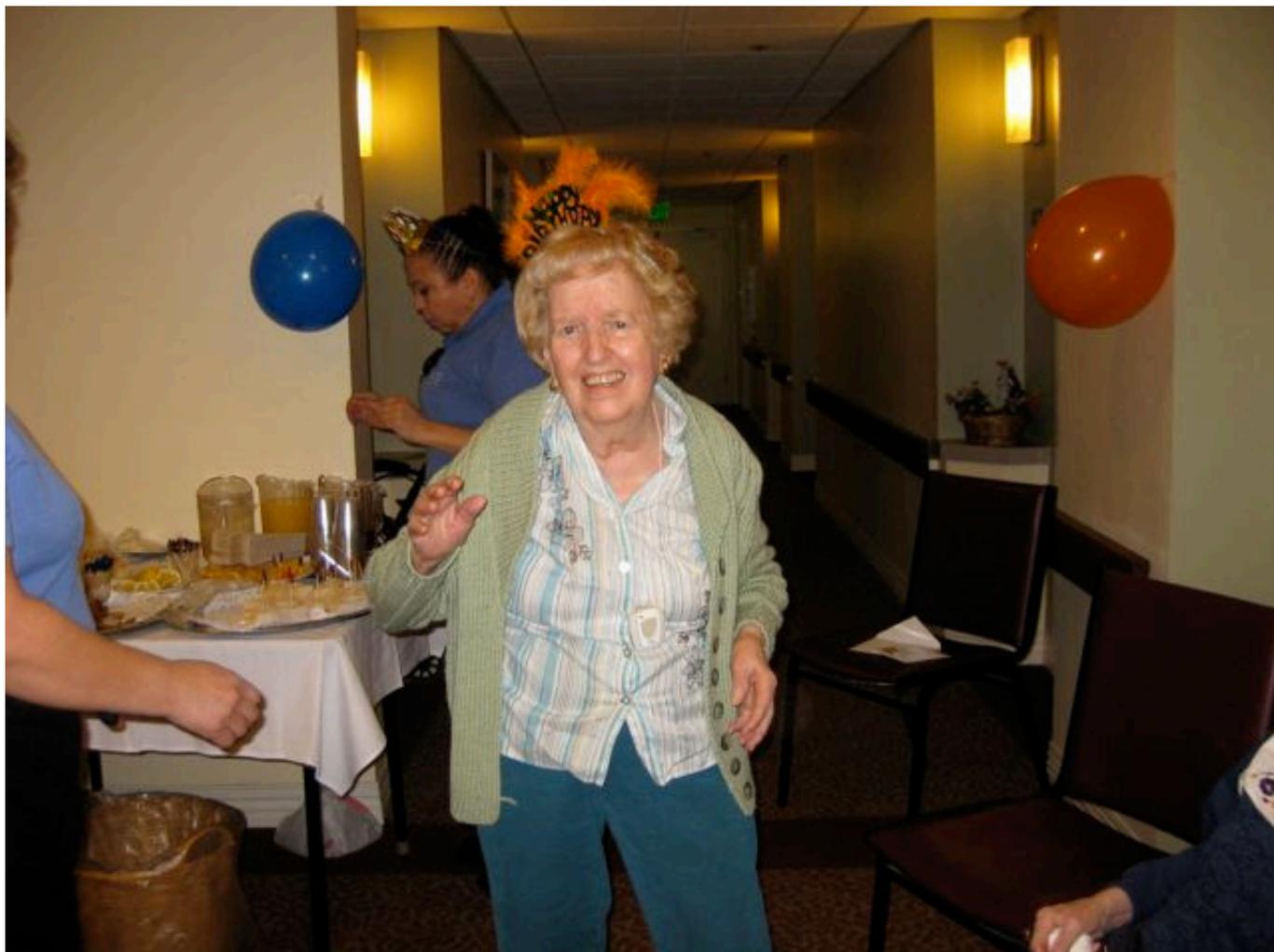
As lovely as the hospital was, it wasn't home to mom - she really wanted to go back to Drake Terrace, so we did. The past week was spent with family and familiar faces of the staff caring for her. Her niece, my cousin, Marie, came, along with her husband Dennis and their daughters Allison and Rachel. She talked with friends on the phone, and even got a visit from Tennessee, a therapy cat. She looked so good on Saturday that my cousin thought there might be another rebound.

And up to almost the end, in spite of being in bed, mom had some enjoyment each day - listening to piano music that reminded her of her older sister Virginia playing the piano, or her Mexican dance music - she even said, "Ole Ole!" in rhythm to Chiapanecas the day before she died. Always the party girl to the end!

The last day was stressful and hard, but it was only one day. Hospice helped us greatly to relieve her anxiety, and we always had someone there to comfort her - her greatest fear was abandonment, and she was accompanied to the last. I am so glad I was in the room as she slipped away. It was not scary, and I even remarked at the time that she got most of what she wanted at the end of life - to not hang on and suffer, but to go quickly.

A family friend remarked that he hoped we would all be able to choose as well as my mom did - that when life has lost its fun and meaning, we will be able to bravely look death in the face and choose what is best.

My mom had plenty of moments of joy in her 91 years, and shared her zest for life with so many. She loved people, was always kind to the ones who had it hard, and treated everyone in a lovely way. I can only hope as her daughter to treat people as kindly as she did.



Dorothy "Helen" Rico

January 27, 1922 - March 7, 2013