

*Breast Cancer:  
A Husband's Reflections*



*Written by Paul McKenzie  
for His Wife Julie*

*In the fall of 2014, it was discovered that my wife Julie had breast cancer. She had twice survived thyroid cancer in the past, and was preparing to help her mother Glenda who was suffering stage four lung cancer.*

*This is a series of Reflections I wrote during the period for her, to let her capture my thoughts, feelings and prayers as she valiantly struggled with the insidious disease, and was finally declared cancer free about a year later.*

*These Reflections include those that I wrote for Julie's beautiful mother Glenda, who was suffering from lung cancer during Julie's bout with the breast cancer. Glenda spent much of her last year with us before she passed on to be with Jesus in May of 2015*

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*1: She Wants to Dance.*

*She laughs, she cries.  
She hears music, She wants to dance.  
She holds me lightly, then very tightly.  
Head on my shoulder, laying softly  
Shaking.  
She weeps.*

*I try to soothe, saying things will be all right  
But I'm not the one in the trial.  
I struggle for words of comfort.  
She doesn't need words,  
She needs my touch,  
My prayers.*

*Right now, it's the anticipation.  
The fear of the unknown.  
Knowing that we are in our Father's will,  
And already seeing His hand in many ways,  
We have hope.  
But still . . .*

*She laughs, she weeps.  
I am her husband.  
Clenched throat, watered eyes,  
Clumsy tongue.*

*Dear Father, give me the wisdom  
To understand her burden,  
And to give her true comfort.*

*For my beloved wife,  
Who has cancer.  
First reflection*

## *2: She Wants to Hear My Music*

*We married as best friends,  
So much in common:  
Born in the hippie generation,  
Like the same stuff.  
The same music.*

*I write. I sing a lot.  
I don't necessarily listen to My stuff often.  
Too critical of every error.  
But now,  
She wants to hear my music.*

*I understand.  
It's partially my music.  
But not all. It's me.  
She wants to hear my voice  
When I'm away.  
I am devastatingly honored.*

*Why would such a wonderful woman,  
A person I do not and never have deserved,  
Want to hear me?  
But yet,  
She wants to hear my music.*

*Cancer is a creeping wickedness.  
Like a thief, it tries to steal one's joy.  
Every good thing is countered with  
Will it last? Or, When will it end?*

*She's afraid of the possibility of  
Losing me.  
It unnerves me to see  
The fear in her soul.  
But yet...*

*She wants to hear my music!  
I have a signal...  
It is one thing I can do with  
My stumbling mouth,  
That says the wrong things.*

*The music is already written,  
Sifted of my  
Stumbling stupidity.  
She wants to hear my music!  
She will hear my music.*

*For my beloved wife  
Who has cancer.  
Second reflection*

*For those who do not know, Julie had surgery Friday for breast cancer, and the surgeon feels confident that it was a success. She is recuperating well. Now come the chemo and radiation treatments. Thank you for your continuing prayers! Oct 25*

### *3: An Uneasy Calm*

*An Uneasy calm.  
Surgery complete.  
A soft, healing process,  
As she gains strength for the next step  
Before the storm of Chemotherapy.*

*Only in rare moments do I hear  
Her speak of her troubles.  
Her mother is very ill,  
The thoughts of my wife  
Are upon her mother's well being.  
My wife is a child of God.*

*How do people do these things  
Without Christ?  
We, as His Father's children  
Know that suffering must  
And will come in a fallen world.  
Children or alien.*

*Aliens complain as to how a loving God  
Can allow suffering upon this world!  
As a child of His grows,  
They understand the depth of man's wickedness.  
Of how this world is evil  
Because of the sin of man.*

*Man freely chooses his wickedness,  
God has not made robots.  
But in His sovereignty  
He knows all, and  
As His children we know  
That all suffering has purpose.*

*Not one hair of our head falls  
That He does not count.*

*As His children, we learn  
To be more like Him.  
In the suffering we see clearly  
Divine love:  
In His children,  
In His church,  
In our family,  
In Providential circumstances,  
In the hands of God-gifted doctors,  
In the voice of a wise and caring Pastor.*

*But mostly, it is in His voice,  
Buried deep within our spirits  
Comforting, consoling,  
Filling us with inner joy and peace.*

*We know that this world is but a moment  
That through great suffering and joy  
Our loving, caring Father is preparing us  
For a greater joy, when all tears will be  
Wiped away.*

*In the meantime, she is calm.  
My wife is a child of God.  
The storm will come,  
But He will be with her,  
And numbers of church and family  
Will be there to support her.  
And I will be there as well,  
For what it's worth.*

*For my beloved wife,  
Who has cancer.  
Third Reflection*

#### *4: Touches are Longer*

*Touches are longer,  
Hands remove slowly,  
Kisses more tender,  
Eyes more sincere.*

*Words spoken quieter,  
Voices raised seldom,  
Selfish opinions  
Less do appear.*

*Small aggravations  
No longer bother us,  
Give us assurance that  
We are still here.*

*Lying in bed at night,  
Holding more tightly,  
Prayers and Providence  
Answer our fear.*

*Sometimes in suffering,  
We find our one-ness,  
Living again for the  
One we hold dear.*

*Hope is now given,  
When this trial has ended,  
What's truly important  
Will all become clear.*

*For my beloved wife,  
Who has cancer.  
Fourth Reflection*

## *5: Parallel Lines*

*Visual reality, Spiritual reality.  
Mercy and Sovereignty.  
She wept in my arms.  
It was difficult night.*

*Sometimes the Light  
Is hard to penetrate  
Through the darkness  
Of what we see.  
Temporarily.*

*She has been strong,  
But the armor  
Broke a little yesterday,  
Seeing her mother suffer,  
Wondering how much she can help,  
When her own treatment comes.*

*She sees parallel lines,  
With her and her mother.  
Mom is in stage 4 cancer;  
She is in stage 2.  
Mom's line is in the "bold" type.  
Hers is in normal script.  
She told me that.*

*Both fought this demon before,  
And overcame.  
Both understand that  
The sun rises,  
And rain falls,*

*On the evil and the good.  
At least in this world.*

*Mother and daughter understand that  
God will wipe the tears from their eyes,  
But not necessarily  
In this world.*

*They also know that there is  
A parallel understanding of outcomes  
Between the evil and the good.  
But similar demons.*

*For some, this world is all they have.  
Mother and Daughter know  
That for them,  
This world is but a moment,  
And eternal bliss rides on its edge.*

*But the pain,  
The fear,  
The tears,  
The rain,  
Falls on the hopeful  
And the hopeless.*

*Visual reality, Spiritual reality.  
Mercy and Sovereignty.  
She wept in my arms.  
It was a difficult night.*

*For my beloved wife,  
Who has cancer.  
Fifth Reflection*



## 6: *Watching Television*

*Watching Television  
With my wife.  
Favorite movie,  
Quite engrossed.  
My wife started talking to me,  
During a very good part.  
I sigh, put the TV on pause.  
She noticed,  
Apologized.  
Was silent for the rest of the show.*

*My wife was going in  
For an MRI the next day,  
To make sure that the other side was clean.*

*We were watching TV.  
Separate chairs,  
Separate thoughts.  
I had this show on DVR,  
I knew how it ended.  
I knew the lines.*

*Working the next day,  
Thinking of that evening.  
As my wife was going for her MRI.  
My thoughts jolted.  
What did she say last night?  
I remembered the lines of the movie, but  
I could not remember what she said.*

*I can rewind the movie,  
And relive the words.  
Hers were said once,  
And are now gone.*

*I've made a vow.  
Each night, before we sit in separate chairs,  
Separate thoughts,  
We will sit together, hands in hands,  
And talk about our day.  
If that is all we do for the evening,  
Then we will be better for it.*

*I told her this.  
She asked if I thought she  
Would not make it through this.  
Then it really hit.*

*Of course, I think she will  
Survive this.  
But,  
Is that how she thinks?  
Is that who I am?  
That I would not be  
Loving,  
Caring,  
If she was not going through this?*

*I've made a vow.  
I intend to keep it.*

*For my wife,  
Who has cancer  
Sixth Reflection*

## 7: *What a New Year!*

*Encouraging news of low risk cancer return,  
Hours later a rush for emergency surgery,  
To repair a detached retina.  
New Year's Eve,  
For my wife.*

*Decision now – chemo or trial,  
While...  
Having to keep her head down  
During painful retinal recovery.  
Beginning her New Year.*

*She marvels at how the initial cures  
Are more painful physically  
Than the initial warnings  
From her body.  
But the mental fears,  
The decisions that affect not only her,  
But all those who love her,  
Increase her pain.*

*About the Retina...*

*First diagnosis suggested  
A possible cancerous tumor in her eye.  
This was her mind set as she  
Called me in tears, while having to  
Drive immediately to a specialist.  
December 30.*

*She prayed perspectivevely.  
If it was her time to depart  
To the better world,  
Then so be it.  
Thankfully for me,  
And the rest of her loved ones,  
She will be here.*

*But the anguish,  
The unknown,  
The questioning,  
The Life and Death decision making...*

*I sit by her on New Year's Day.  
Her head down,  
Neck Pain,  
Shoulder Pain,  
Eye Pain,  
Sensitive to light.  
Unwanted Helplessness.*

*Her thoughts drift to her mother,  
Also in unwanted helplessness.  
She says it helps her understand  
Her mother's plight.*

*My New Year's Resolution?  
To serve the best that I can.*

*For my wife,  
Who has cancer  
Seventh Reflection*

## *8: Learning More about Providence*

*Learning more about Providence  
Through my wife's unnerving journey.  
Possibility of a trial to forgo chemo.  
Decision delayed, waiting and waiting...*

*Results come the exact day that  
She finds she has a detached retina.  
Surgery and healing  
Puts her beyond the qualifying date.*

*Decision: basic cancer protocol  
Port to be in Monday,  
First chemo treatment Tuesday.  
Instead of many two-week treatments,  
Four three-week treatments.*

*Providential delays?  
Would eye surgery with chemo have  
Caused dangerous complications?  
Weakened conditions hindering healing?  
Excessive bleeding? Infections?*

*Would forgoing chemo in a trial  
Have resulted in an unwanted recurrence?*

*We've had time to think,  
Time for good counsel, many prayers.  
In a multitude of good counselors  
There is wisdom.*

*Great advice from our beloved Pastor to  
Prayerfully consider the wisdom  
Of good counsel.  
Weigh the circumstances.  
Prayerfully make the decision.  
And when the decision is made,  
To not look back.*

*It is a fallen world,  
And with it comes fallen things,  
Such as cancer.  
On the evil and the good.  
But in the gentle hands of Christ  
We trust.*

*For my wife,  
Who has cancer  
Eighth Reflection*

## 9: First Day of Chemotherapy

Hands are shaking.  
That's what I notice.  
Day begins normally,  
But as the time draws near  
She says she is worried.  
First time in long time.

She is breathing a little  
More rapidly, just a little.  
Her sighs are stronger.  
And when she points,  
Her hands are shaking.  
There is a quiet tension.

Time to go.  
I'm the type that if  
I'm not early I'm late.  
She's the type that if  
She's on time she's early.  
Two cars have saved a  
marriage.

I determine to be patient.  
She is ready,  
With little time to spare.

I'm a train magnet,  
She takes chances.  
We travel her way,  
To save time.  
A train is there.

I comment.  
Typical arrogant male scolding.  
She usually lets it go,  
She knows how I am.  
This time is different.

She lets me know.  
I feel like a heel.

Here she is,  
Paying to be poisoned,  
And hoping the poison  
Kills the cancer  
Before it kills her.

And I am complaining  
About a train.

We get there,  
I have to go to work in an  
hour,  
But hope to be by her side  
When it begins.  
Since the process takes hours  
We have a friend waiting to  
Bring her back home.

We wait.  
See many people  
Resigned to a similar fate.  
Different walks of life,  
Different cancers.

I reach for her hand,  
It is still shaking  
She squeezes.  
Hard.  
Does not let go.  
Does not relieve pressure.

We are finally led into the  
room.  
Reminds me of a salon  
For my wife,  
Who has cancer  
Ninth Reflection

Many chairs, many machines.  
At least it looks relaxing.

Kind nurses, assistants.  
Quiet atmosphere.  
Free coffee, snacks, hot  
chocolate.  
I have to leave in ten minutes.  
At least I am satisfied that she  
Will be comfortable during  
This stressful time.

I have to leave.  
She is settled in a chair,  
Getting ready.  
I walk out with an empty  
feeling.  
I pray for her,  
Feeling like an idiot again  
About a stupid train.

Little things will be bigger  
For a while.  
What is normal for me  
Will not be normal for her  
During this time.

Home from work, I  
See her on the couch.  
Relaxing.  
Not shaking.  
Upset stomach,  
But calm.  
I sit by her, kiss her.  
She smiles.

The first day is over.

## 10: Heavy Snow this Evening

Heavy snow this evening.  
Before I go to bed  
I see the lovely reflection  
Of perfect whiteness.

I'm nearly asleep.  
My wife begins to talk,  
Her heart is heavy,  
Worried by the varied  
Professional responses, and  
Whether we waited too long.  
Coupled with concern  
For her mother's condition,  
She asks me to pray.

Some effects of the "medication"  
Are showing themselves:  
Fingertips on fire,  
Mouth with a few sores.  
And she still cannot see  
Out of her repaired eye.  
She has a heavy heart.

We pray, we muse.  
She wants me closer.  
I had reached that point  
That lures you to sleep.  
I'm trying to fight it,  
I know she needs me.

I wonder about the apostles,  
On that great night of sorrow  
When they slept through Christ's agony.  
I relate to their weakness.  
Unfortunately.

She mentions again about  
Her concern that she might  
Be a burden to me.  
Personally, I think this is ridiculous,  
I am her husband!

I hear her ask again; worried tone.  
I forgot to answer out loud.  
I'm in a flux of being  
Asleep and awake.

It is 4:30 am.  
Did I fall asleep in the middle  
Of our conversation?  
I reach out and touch her,  
She touches me back,  
Tenderly.  
Slight relief. I let her sleep.

I sleep a little later this morning,  
Wake up, and walk out,  
Then return to  
Kiss her on the cheek.  
This is a new ritual  
Since the cancer began.  
I almost forgot.

We touch hands, rub arms,  
Kiss a little longer,  
Hold each other  
A little longer.  
We express our love  
To each other.

I let her sleep.  
And pray for her.  
I look out the window  
At the reflected whiteness of the  
Cold snow.

And in the midst of this coldness  
Lies the warm, Quiet Hand  
Of the One Who knows our suffering.  
And does not sleep.  
In Him we trust.  
And in His warmth we rest.

For my wife,  
Who has cancer  
Tenth Reflection

"Perplexed, but not in despair" 2 Corinthians 4:8

## 11: My Mother in Law: A Reflection

I met Glenda before I met Julie,  
At a political committee within our church  
My first impression described her  
As articulate, beautiful, intelligent and strong.  
My following impression was that  
I was outclassed.

It was a pleasant surprise to find  
That she was Julie's mother.  
As I got to know her better,  
I found my initial impressions were true.  
And, after meeting Julie's father  
(Do not misread, I loved her father dearly)  
I added to her another quality:  
Stoic patience.

When her husband's mind succumbed to Alzheimer's  
Her patience was tried with enormous success.  
Many a day she had to leave her own home  
Because her husband thought she was another woman,  
And was worried what would happen,  
If his wife came home.

She would leave, call minutes later;  
Tell him that she was on her way,  
She would arrive to unabashed relief,  
And the cycle would begin again.

She loved him well, to the very moment of his passing,  
Soft spoken, patiently concealing her silent grief.  
She then devoted her life again to the family,  
Caring, thoughtful mother,  
Loving Grandmother,  
Treating each little one equally  
Within their unique personalities.  
She would try not to miss an event,  
No matter how trivial.

Then the cancer came.  
This was not the first time.  
She had fought off two cancers before.  
But this one was and is insidious.  
Lung cancer, stage four.

She has been struggling for a few years,  
Fighting this thing.  
It has bitten part of her neck,  
She must now live with a constant brace.

Impeccably considerate of others,  
She would not think to intrude upon them,  
Unless she had no other choice.  
Probably later than she should have,  
She finally reached the point  
Where caring for herself  
Alone in her home,  
Was no longer feasible.

She is now resigned to reluctant dependency.  
She does what she can, when she is able.  
The disease has forced her into humiliating situations:  
Hacking, Vomiting, Breathing difficulties,  
Wheelchairs, Walkers,  
Struggling just to master a few steps.  
Getting in and out of cars.  
Sometimes not even able to get up from the bathroom.

Being forced into unwanted circumstance,  
Embarrassed, but in so much pain,  
She must rely on those she trusts,  
And sometimes those she does not.  
Putting up with people paid to help,  
With her knowing full well,  
She is nothing more than part of the job.

The cause of this musing was the night before last.  
We were all going to bed.  
Julie was into her first week of chemotherapy  
And went upstairs.  
As I said goodnight,  
I barely heard Glenda call for me.  
She was struggling to breathe.  
Pneumonia has been added to her suffering.

Since she could not lie down,  
I brought her back to her chair.  
She asked if I could remain downstairs for a while,  
Until she stabilized.

*I determined to remain in my chair for that night,  
To make sure that all was well.*

*I was awakened that night  
To a fit of excruciating coughing.  
Dry heaves, hacking, soft groaning.  
I thought of this sweet, stoic woman,  
Having to succumb to this humiliation  
In front of her daughter's husband,  
And proud to know that she loved me enough  
To allow it.*

*In the morning, her first concern  
Was whether I slept well.*

*My life is on hold right now,  
Caring for my wife and her mother when I can.*

*But, then again,  
Is my life really on hold?  
Or is this the purpose for which God  
Has prepared me?  
Is it really all the exploits,  
The events, the professions,  
The giftings, the talents ...*

*Or is it  
Whatsoever you do to the least of these My children,  
That you do unto Me.*

*Maybe my life has been on hold  
Until this very moment.  
What I do know, is that it is a great honor  
To serve these two great women of God.*

*Written Feb 5, 2015*

## *12: Trying on Wigs*

*Trying on wigs  
With her friend Patty.  
Her hair is beginning to leave her.  
Her friend Patty,  
First friends because of mutual suffering;  
Now friends because of mutual love.*

*Last appointment was encouraging.  
A third shot not needed,  
Blood work promising.  
Second chemo installment next week.*

*She was happy today,  
Laughing with her friend.  
She picked out head scarves,  
A comfortable "Marilyn Monroe" shirt,  
And warm, comfortable pants.  
Telling us that when the time came,  
She would have a shearing party  
With some of her family,  
And celebrate future healing.*

*Three more injections to go  
Within the next 9 weeks.  
And then radiation.*

*We had hoped to visit  
Our soon to be wedded son in Tennessee,  
And our new grandson in Florida.  
That will have to wait a while.*

*She thought she might take a picture  
With her head between the heads of  
Two bald little grandchildren!  
Now that would be fun.  
They will be growing their hair  
Together.*

*I had to leave for work.  
Her friend Patty was with her,  
Along with Glenda, her mother.  
It was nice to leave  
Seeing brightness amidst  
The nagging cloud of suffering.*

*The wigs looked lovely on her.  
But of course,  
She is a lovely person.  
No matter what is  
Placed upon her.*

*For my wife,  
Who has cancer  
Eleventh Reflection*



### *13: Compassionate People*

*I am amazed with compassionate people  
For me it is extremely uncomfortable,  
I simply do not know what to say.*

*However...*

*I'm learning that it is not what you say,  
But how you listen,  
How you react,  
And what you do.  
By observing those  
Who seem to do this  
So easily.*

*My wife tries to squeeze this out of me.  
She presents a dilemma,  
Expresses an emotion, a question.  
I immediately seek to find an answer,  
Express my logical conclusions,  
And frustrate her.  
She doesn't want my answer,  
She wants my understanding.*

*For my wife,  
Who has cancer  
Twelfth Reflection*

*14: Went to Church Last Sunday*

*Went to church last Sunday  
Julie stayed home  
I missed her, and hoped  
She could come as soon  
As her eye healed enough  
To look up.*

*After worshipping with my mandolin,  
I sat down in the usual seat –  
The front row, to remove distractions.  
A woman behind me was  
Coughing, sniffing,  
Clearing her throat.*

*The sermon was just beginning,  
The Pastor praying,  
So I took the time to  
Find another seat.  
I do not want to carry  
Any sickness home in  
My wife's susceptible condition.*

*As I went to the back,  
The church was so packed,  
That there was no seat to  
Unobtrusively plant myself.*

*I determined to stand by the back wall,  
When I saw, in the far corner,  
By the window,  
In the brightest area of the church,  
One seat, placed by itself,  
Behind all the others.  
Waiting for me.*

*And when I sat,  
I prayed for my dear wife,  
And her mother,  
And as usual,  
Enjoyed an insightful sermon  
By my extraordinary Pastor.*

*For the time being,  
Julie will remain home,  
And listen to the podcasts.*

*For my wife,  
Who has cancer  
Thirteenth Reflection*

## *15: Trying to be Normal*

*Trying to be normal  
With a wife sick with cancer  
Is a difficult thing.*

*Trying to be normal  
With a wife sick with cancer  
Reveals sometimes  
That your normal  
Is flawed.*

*Trying to be normal  
With a wife sick with cancer  
Amplifies the normal  
That should not be normal.*

*Trying to be normal  
With a wife sick with cancer  
Helps you see  
That your normal  
Might need to change  
Even after the sickness  
Is over.*

*For my wife,  
Who has cancer  
Fourteenth Reflection*

## *16: Head Shaving Day*

*Head shaving day.  
I kissed my wife when  
I woke this morning.  
Felt part of her hair  
Remove from her head.*

*It is certainly time.*

*I walked into the bathroom  
And stepped on a clump  
Of soft, blonde hair,  
Lying on the floor.*

*It is certainly time.*

*She has a habit of twisting her hair,  
Doing it right now simply  
Pulls more out.  
She cut a number of inches off last night  
So she wouldn't keep doing that.*

*It is certainly time.*

*I am now preparing for church  
Then getting some final items  
For the "head shaving" party  
We will have today  
With a few friends and loved ones.*

*It is certainly time.*

## *Head Shaving Day, Part II*

*3 o' clock,  
Daughters could not make it  
Sickness and an unbreakable obligation.  
Sister-in-Law Linda is pulling up,  
With Chuck, her husband.  
Linda has to be here.  
She's doing the work.*

*Julie is nonplussed  
She tells Linda that now  
She believes this is meant to be.  
Linda, Chuck, Me, and Glenda,  
Her mother.  
Intimate. Perfect.*

*We have conversation,  
Julie sits in her chair  
To prepare.  
We have more conversation.  
And more.  
Julie finally says,  
"Have I delayed this long enough?"*

*Linda first cuts the length,  
So that the shaver will not clog  
With too much hair.  
I get the honor of taking pictures  
Of the procedure.*

*I think I am more nervous than Julie.*

*I remember that her utmost dread  
When she found out,  
Was losing her hair from chemo treatments.  
She has resigned herself to it now,  
Not only resigned, but has prepared,  
And ready with wigs,  
If necessary.*

*Every snip gives me makes me nervous.  
As I snap pictures.*

*I wonder if the words  
Were just words.  
How will she truly react?  
She laughs and talks.  
Directs me to where she wants the photos.  
She is curious as to what she  
Will find when her hair is removed.*

*The scissors are finished.  
Linda now plugs in the shaver.  
It is a weird feeling  
Watching your wife  
Getting her head shaved.*

*We are all surprised at how dark  
The remnants of her hair were.  
Makes us curious as to what color  
Her hair will be when  
She licks this disease.*

*Well, it is over.  
She looks at some of the photos,  
And is surprised that one of them  
Remind her of her brother,  
Linda's former husband,  
Who died of brain cancer  
When he was in his twenties.*

*She looks beautiful.*

*We talk again, laugh a little  
As she tries on wigs.  
Glenda and I like the redhead best.  
Julie likes the blonde, of course.  
She is still having a bit of trouble  
Getting them just right.  
Her friend Patty will come over  
Tomorrow to give her further pointers.  
But the main work is done.  
Successfully.*

### *Head Shaving Day, Part III*

*As Linda leaves, Katy arrives  
With Chris and four kids.  
The kids seem to react well.  
Julie has pictures take with them all.  
She wanted to have pictures with  
The little ones who still have not quite  
Grown into their natural head coverings.  
But one is sick, so it's just a pair.*

*It is interesting how much the  
Hair accents a face.  
When it is gone,  
Other features fill in the gaps.  
Eyes are especially noticeable.  
The earrings on the ears really show up.  
A smile accents far more of the face.  
It will be an interesting period.  
And interesting to see how this artist  
Readjusts her features.*

*The older children help me prepare dinner,  
And everything begins to seem normal.  
It will be a new normal for a while.*

*Head Shaving Day, Part IV*

*Evening quiet. Children gone.  
Julie, Glenda, and I,  
Watching television together.  
As we all watch television with our eyes closed,  
We determine that it might be time for bed.  
All seems so normal,  
Until I see her face again.*

*She is beautiful.*

*I did not ask her what she thought,  
When she looked in the mirror that night  
Before she went to bed.  
I need to.  
It might make a significant reflection.*

*For my wife,  
Who has cancer,  
Fifteenth Reflection*

## *17: Covering*

*There is a passage in the Scriptures  
That encourage women to  
Cover their heads,  
Because of the angels.*

*Never understood the passage  
Still don't.  
Other than the inference that their  
Hair is a natural,  
God given covering.*

*My wife has lost her covering  
In the process of the cure  
From a devilish disease  
Common to many women.*

*She opened the door for me  
As I came in from work.  
I saw a covering.  
A light, abiding above her head.  
Eyes accented in a way  
I had never seen before.  
A bright and confident smile.*

*I saw her sitting in her chair that evening  
She looked up at me and smiled.  
I again saw that light covering her.  
And I kissed her covering.*

*I think that in times like these,  
God may send those very angels,  
To help cover a suffering woman  
With light.*

*Because she certainly looks  
Like an angel.*

*For my wife,  
Who has cancer  
Sixteenth Reflection*



## *18: A New Wrinkle*

*We were at peace with the new regimen:  
Chemo, radiation, and anti-estrogen pills.  
With concern for her daughters,  
Julie went through genetic testing.*

*Results: Possible multiple cancer possibilities  
If going through radiation treatment.  
Solution? Possible full mastectomy.  
No radiation.*

*Could this be Providence?  
Our first intent was to go strictly with radiation  
Circumstances prevented it.  
Now, could it have been  
The absolute worst thing we could have done?*

*For my wife,  
Who has cancer  
Seventeenth Reflection*

## *19: Julie's Joy*

*I think it began when she wanted to relax,  
Her daughter Katy came to stay awhile.  
The weariness was overcome by conversation,  
Baby's laughter, and a lot of love.*

*The evening spent with sisters and the oldest girls,  
A night of games and food and fun and teasing;  
And as the night was over and we went to bed,  
Julie said her heart was filled with joy*

*The next day brought the daughters and the grandkids,  
A brood of bustle each in their own ways;  
While a man had come over installing,  
An oxygen machine for Glenda's peace.*

*All the life, the craziness of children!  
Messes, laughter, play and drops galore;  
Miniature traumas, games, the scampering!  
Breaking normal silence into NOISE!*

*Wonderful noise.*

*Julie had her favorite picture taken,  
Pairing balded heads with Jonna's Julie;  
Katy's Callen was to be included, but  
Alas, his hair was much too far along.*

*When all was still, we coveted the silence,  
Coupled with sweet remnants of the memories  
That little children missed at pickup time.  
Julie said to me with joyful smile,*

*She did not think  
That she had ever been  
Happier.*

*For my wife,  
Who has cancer  
Eighteenth Reflection*

*20: Thank You For the Uneventful*

*Thank You for the Uneventful,  
For a day of quiet peace;  
For a soft with no potential,  
For a time of sweet release.*

*For a day filled with unwinding,  
For a blissful mid-day sleep;  
Nothing needed, nothing binding  
No specific goals to keep.*

*Sitting in a room of breathing,  
With no pressure, no event;  
Nothing brewing, nothing seething,  
Just ambiguous intent.*

*Day where stories are not written,  
Boring for a pen to write;  
No regrets, nor thoughts hard-bitten,  
Nothing heavy, all things light.*

*Though the storms may quickly bend us,  
Wracking grief along the way;  
But for now, Thy rest will mend us,  
On this Uneventful day.*

*For Julie, Glenda, and me.*

*3/8/2015*

## 21: Another Unwanted Decision

Another unwanted decision.  
It is now not a matter of  
A mastectomy.  
That has become a given.

It is the choice of taking  
Not only the diseased,  
But the potentially diseased as well,  
Since genetic discovery has  
Increased that possibility fourfold.

It hurts when your wife asks  
If you regret being married,  
To someone so flawed.

I scoffed at the statement!  
How ridiculous!  
I don't think of physical maladies as flaws.  
Flaws are from the heart:  
Self centeredness, malice,  
Violence, lust, envy.  
My Savior taught me that.

And I contain far more of them  
Than she does.

Yet in the way I scoff, I hurt her.  
Her mind is in torment.  
She is a woman,  
And part of that femininity

Is being taken from her.  
How can I truly understand?

I hug her, reassure her.  
Of course I don't regret!  
She is the best thing that has  
Happened to me in this world.

She shares my loves, my longings,  
My interests.  
We are from the same generation,  
And understand each other well.

She accepted a broken, flawed vessel  
Into her life,  
And with Christ as our glue,  
We have been made one.

I understand her pain -  
Somewhat.  
No,  
I probably don't.

Heavenly Father,  
At times I do not have the right words,  
The right actions,  
To give my wife assurance of my love.

Teach me how to express,  
What so fills my heart.

For my wife,  
Who has cancer  
Nineteenth Reflection

## **22: Insurance**

*Insurance! A great scare.  
To add to my wife's sense  
Of being a burden,  
We find we may have to pay back  
Subsidies.  
We are not at a poverty level,  
Because we needed money,  
And took from a small pension fund.*

*This could wreck us financially  
In time.*

*I told her,  
If we go broke,  
We go broke together.  
All that matters is that  
We are able to get her well.*

*If they drive us to poverty  
Well, then at least we get  
A Subsidy.*

*But I firmly believe  
That all my assets are owned  
Not by us, but God.  
The treasures on this earth  
Are nothing compared to the  
Treasure in our earthen vessels,  
Which house the Holy Spirit –  
Our guarantee  
To eternal bliss.  
Call it what you want.  
We call it Hope,  
Hope that transforms us  
To become Heavenly children.*

*We trust You Lord,  
No matter the circumstance.  
And we trust together  
For better or for worse.*

*For my wife,  
Who has cancer  
Twentieth Reflection*

### 23: My Wife wants to go to Church

*My wife wants to go to church,  
But she knows that her mother needs her.  
My wife is in the throes of deciding  
Which surgeon will do her mastectomies.  
But her mother is literally gasping for life  
In constant pain.*

*With her mother in such a serious condition,  
My wife has little time to think of her own condition.  
Many of us tend to overlook the  
Very strong, uncomfortable chemotherapy  
My wife endured  
While caring for her mother,  
Because my wife takes pain  
Silently, and very well.*

*She told me last week that she was scared.  
She doesn't mention herself often.  
She said that she looked in the mirror  
And felt she saw a fat, bald old man.  
I told her not to be silly.  
It hurt her feelings.  
She was not silly,  
She was scared.*

*She wanted some comfort.  
I thought I was doing that,  
But I'm pretty bad at expressing it to her.  
I asked her what words I can say  
That lets her know I care.  
She gave me some tips,  
Which were very good.*

*I wish I could express myself  
As well as she can.*

*But, I know, if I take her tips,  
I'll just sound like I'm  
Mimicking her.  
I need to practice.*

*I'm going to church this morning,  
Again, without her.  
But my prayers will be with her  
And her mother,  
As well as the prayers  
Of all those wonderful saints  
That worship with us,  
And care,  
And drive her mother,  
And send dinners,  
And cards,  
And anything we may need,  
If we express it to them.*

*And in this way,  
Though it is not quite the same  
My wife does get to experience  
True church.  
And being with her mother  
At the time of her greatest need  
Is church as well.  
And in this,  
My wife is a good Minister.*

*For my wife,  
Who is battling cancer.  
Twenty-first Reflection*

## *24: Fading*

*Fading.*

*Fading from this world  
Into the one she was meant to be.*

*Pain.*

*Weary from the pain of this world  
Longing for the rest she was meant to have.*

*Soon.*

*Maybe soon from this darkness  
Into the Glorious Arms she was meant to embrace.*

*Hope.*

*From the small room of this world  
Into the large, Eternal Country she was meant to live.*

*Joy.*

*Now just deep within her spirit  
Soon, as a metamorphosis,  
Springing full flight from her emaciated body  
To the breath-taking body of Heaven.  
Where all meaning  
Becomes reality.*

*To my dear Mother-in-law,  
Suffering from Cancer.*

## 25: Stage 4

### Stage 4.

*My wife came home yesterday,  
Not knowing how to tell me.  
In a CAT scan to check her pancreas,  
They happened to find cancer in her bones.*

*I get these feelings sometimes.  
Feels like dirty rags wiping my stomach.  
Had it for the last two days.  
A scripture passage was going through my mind  
From Job,  
"Shall we accept the good from God,  
And not the adversity?"  
Not a good feeling.*

*We are stunned.  
She told me when she heard the words,  
It was like a dream,  
Like the doctor was not talking about her.*

*On the way home that night,  
I thought I would surprise her  
And put our lazy boy chairs  
Next to each other in the living room,  
So we could hold hands while  
Relaxing at night.*

*Didn't know that there would be  
A very strong reason to do it.  
But God is good that way.  
He knows how to help us react  
In this dark world,  
When dark things happen.*

*We did sit together last night,  
Holding hands,  
Relaxing.  
Stunned.  
Not knowing our future*

*During this short stay  
On earth.*

*My wife is concerned as to  
Whether she should tell her mother,  
Who is in and out of consciousness  
And wanting to go Home.  
My wife doesn't want this burden  
Placed on her as well.*

*We went to bed together last night.  
I prayed,  
"Father, we do not know how to pray  
Right now."  
And that is true.  
We do not know how to pray,  
But we do know how to abide.*

*Job's wife said,  
"Curse God and die."  
Never could figure the logic behind that.  
Why curse the only Person  
Who understands, Who truly cares,  
Who has been with us through every trial,  
Who loves us in spite of ourselves,  
And who proved to us His love  
By His goodness, His healing touch,  
His defense of the downtrodden,  
His rebuke of the arrogant,  
His silent acceptance of what was to come,  
The mockery, the beatings, the Crucifixion.*

*The Resurrection,  
The glorified Body,  
The Ascension,  
And the Return to come,  
Where He will wipe away all tears.*

*Jesus revealed to us that in this world,*



*We will have tribulation.  
The hard part for me is  
Seeing what my wife has to endure,  
To see her tears,  
While I watch.  
And feel small.*

*James says that the  
Trying of our faith  
Works patience,  
And when patience has its  
Perfect work,  
We will be complete,  
Wanting nothing.*

*Patience.  
Abiding.  
Branches on a Glorious Vine.  
In the midst of a world  
Wrought with thorns and  
Unholy, sinful, wicked weeds.*

*They hurt.  
But we will not break,  
Our Life Source is much Stronger.  
And flows within us  
Even at Stage Four.*

*Who knows?  
He may yet heal completely  
Either through those whose  
Talents were given them by God,  
Or by God Himself.  
Either way,  
We know that He  
Will wipe the tears from our eyes.  
And we abide.*

*But for now.  
The tears are there.  
I woke up this morning  
And kissed my wife.  
She smiled.  
We will abide.*

*To my wife,  
Who has cancer.  
Twenty-second Reflection*

*Revelation 21:4: "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (NKJV)*

## 26: The Prayer

Two of our friends came from Tennessee  
To visit friends in the area.  
One had a great prompting by the Holy Spirit  
To pray for Julie.

This was constantly on her mind she said  
As they made the trip.  
The couple came to our house,  
We had a nice dinner,  
And then they prayed.

It was a long, heartfelt prayer,  
A very moving moment.  
I remember her husband  
Singing,  
"Jesus loves Julie, This I know..."  
While they both held on to her.

Very simple, very sincere,  
Very loving.

Usually I join in,  
When hands are laid upon an afflicted person.  
But I sensed that this was not my time.  
I prayed silently, close by.

A few days later we received a report  
That Julie had moved from stage two to stage four.  
The cancer, they said, had moved into the bones.  
This was devastating news.  
We were encouraged to get a second opinion,

Julie did not know how to tell her mother,  
Who was then only hours away from flying to Jesus.  
Yet, we still had a calm.  
We have learned through this,  
What it means to abide in Christ.  
We know that whatever happens,

God is in control.  
We both knew as well,  
That the test that showed the possible cancer  
Was taken before the prayer.  
So we waited with an unexpected hope.

When we did get the second opinion.  
We found that the new doctors who checked the MRI  
Were doubtful as to whether this was cancer.  
An MRI and PET scan were scheduled,  
As we waited with renewed hope.

A week later we were told.  
NO cancer.

My wife told many about the good news.  
I especially was touched by one of our grandkids,  
When finding out the news,  
Immediately ran to her dad saying,  
"See! I told you that there is power in prayer!"

We now continue to finish the preventatives  
That we hope will keep cancer from returning.  
We will continue to abide in Christ  
For our sustenance.

And we will be forever thankful  
For two obedient children in Christ  
Who came and prayed for us  
At the time we needed it most.

And this is the way God has worked  
Throughout this whole journey.  
Thank you Father,  
For letting us know  
That in the midst of this dark world,  
That You provide the Eternal Light,  
And guide us toward it.

For my wife,  
Who may at this time  
Be cancer free!  
Twenty-third Reflection

## 27: For My Dear Mother in Law

*"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies." (Proverbs 31:10)*

*We know a virtuous woman.  
She has lived this earth 80 years.  
My wife knew her for 60 of them.  
I knew her for nearly 20.  
We lost her yesterday.*

*She is now a living light in Heaven,  
With Father saying to her,  
"Well done.  
Good and faithful servant.  
Your sufferings are finished.  
Enter into the joy of your Lord!"*

*In the midst of her new found joy,  
We have new found sorrow.  
We will hear rightly  
From many well-meaning friends  
Who really do not know what else to say,  
That She is in a better place.*

*My friend, Gary Huddleston,  
Told me just last week,  
That after his wife had succumbed  
From cancer, not too many years ago,  
That people would say that to him,  
And he would think,  
Yes, she is,  
But I am in a worse place now.*

*Those who love this virtuous woman  
Are indeed comforted by the fact  
That this virtuous woman is now  
Relieved of the pain she has suffered,  
Especially in the last few years of her  
Life in this fallen world.*

*Her last weeks were wrought with pain.  
The last day at our house  
She pleaded that she needed to get up  
To use the bathroom,*

*But was too weak,  
She looked up and said,  
"I just do not know what to do!"  
The first time I had heard those words.  
And I knew then,  
That it was close.*

*When she was awake with us,  
Every movement was accompanied  
With a soft moan.  
She would apologize for her moans.*

*Providentially, in the last week  
Her daughter was able to call  
A living angel named Linda  
Who runs the adult care center  
That once housed Glenda's husband.*

*Providentially,  
She had one open room,  
Where Glenda spent many days and months  
Previously,  
Caring for her husband.  
It was her time to be cared for.*

*In the end of her time on this world  
She was kept relatively comfortable  
By some very caring people.  
Not in the coldness of an overcrowded  
Nursing home,  
But in a homey atmosphere.*

*In the last visit,  
My wife mentioned that she had bought begonias,  
One of Glenda's favorites.  
She could not speak well any longer,  
Probably from the meds,  
But then repeated "Begonias" many times.  
As my wife wept before her,  
She said "Don't cry".*

*Don't cry.*

*Last night,  
Julie received a call.*

*The assistants thought that it may be time,  
And in the midst of the conversations  
Glenda met Jesus,  
Face to face.*

*The assistants said,  
Her last words were  
"That man, That man!"  
She was seeing someone.*

*From the ensuing conversation,  
They deduced she was saying that  
She was seeing God.  
Not long after  
She moved on.*

*A great light has now entered Heaven.  
God judges Greatness by His Goodness,  
And His Goodness was well reflected  
In Glenda.*

*She had the meek and quiet spirit  
As is spoken in First Peter.  
She did not speak evil of others,  
As is spoken in James.*

*She could do all things through Christ  
Who gave her strength  
As is spoken in Philippians.  
I never saw her truly angry  
(Though, being a Christian conservative,  
She was not afraid to voice her opinions  
about the moral degradations happening in  
our country today).*

*And I don't think I ever saw her sin.  
As is spoken of in Ephesians.*

*She comforted the feeble-minded  
Especially her husband as he  
Succumbed to Alzheimer's  
As is spoken in First Thessalonians.*

*She was as wise as a serpent,  
And as harmless as a dove,  
As spoken by her Savior  
In Matthew 10.*

*She has fought the good fight,  
And has finished her course,  
And before her now is a crown  
Of righteousness,  
As spoken in Second Timothy,  
With which she will cast before  
Her Heavenly Father,  
As spoken in Revelation.*

*She was the ultimate Great-Grandmother,  
Making every event,  
For every grandchild  
That she could.  
And remembering every one of them  
In every occasion.*

*She was the ultimate Grandmother,  
Not only to her own, but  
Regarding my children as her  
Grandchildren,  
Not regarding blood,  
But love.*

*She was the ultimate mother,  
Patient, Patient, Patient,  
Wise, loving,  
Never afraid to tell the truth,  
Even if it hurt.  
And always willing to forgive,  
No matter how much one  
Might hurt her.*

*She was the ultimate wife,  
Who stood by her husband,  
Quietly patient,  
Quietly offering advice,  
And sometimes heeded.  
There for him in his greatest need.  
Forever caring, and loving.*

*She was the ultimate mother in law,  
Easy to talk to,  
Always interesting,  
Intelligent,  
Respectful,  
Honest,  
Complimentary,  
But never afraid  
To speak the truth.  
Christian  
Through and through.*

*My greatest thought will ever be  
How much she valued praying  
With Julie and I.*

*There is so much more to say,  
And I truly believe that it is*

*Now being said in Heaven  
With great rejoicing.  
I will close with words from  
The Bible,  
Which she knew to be more than  
Just a book,  
But the Word of God.*

*“Her children arise up,  
and call her blessed;  
her husband also,  
and he praiseth her.  
Many daughters have  
done virtuously,  
But thou  
Excellest them all.”  
Proverbs 31: 28-29.*

*Amen, Glenda,  
Amen.*

*Though our loss is great,  
Heaven's gain is greater still.  
We will carry an empty place  
That will be filled  
When we see you again.  
Let our tears  
Be part of the waters  
That sail your ship  
Into the arms  
Of our Savior.*

*For my dear Mother in Law  
Who has rested from her labors. May 4, 2015.*

*28: I Woke With the Birds this Morning*

*I woke with the birds this  
morning  
First time this Spring  
Before 6, still dark,  
  
Woke up with anticipation  
What will this day bring  
What will Christ bring.  
  
Possible good news for Julie  
Her back possibly misdiagnosed.  
Can bring her from 4 back to 2.  
  
Julie walks in sadness.  
She says it is like a steady line  
Of soft pain  
That occasionally moves up,  
Then down.  
  
She misses her mother.  
She is in no rush,  
Actually has no desire  
To check her mother's estate.  
  
She says that her mother  
Has passed only a week  
And the mourning is still there,*

*Loud pain.  
Though happy her mother's  
Pain is relieved.  
  
Loud listening,  
But hearing only silence  
Where there was once  
A wise, friendly ear,  
Listening,  
And giving  
Well intended advice.  
  
Julie's news from  
Those who give an  
Encouraging second opinion  
Would have been given first  
To her mother.  
  
She told me  
It was almost second nature  
To make that call,  
But  
She no longer has that ear  
A phone call away.  
  
I am her husband,  
And a dear friend as well.  
But I am not her mother.*

*I can never take that place,  
But I can try to revive  
Some of the memories,  
Try to anticipate  
What her mother might have said.  
  
But I am not her mother.  
  
I woke with the birds this  
morning,  
And looked over at my sleeping  
wife.  
It is hard to see the pain.  
I kissed her,  
Went about my business.  
  
And realized that  
It was Mother's Day.  
The first she cannot share  
With her mother on this earth.  
  
Sleep, darling wife,  
While the world awakes,  
This may be a hard day to face.  
I hope in some way,  
I can face it with you.*

*For my wife,  
Who has cancer  
A Mother's Day Reflection  
Twenty-fourth  
Daily Memory Verse:  
Ephesians 5:25*

*"Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it..."*

## *29: Breathing Easier*

*Breathing Easier.  
Spending two weeks in fear  
Of a possibility of stage four  
Has been alleviated by further tests.*

*PET scan revealed no cancer.  
Back to the double mastectomy.  
Funny, how a double mastectomy,  
And stage two cancer  
Is a welcome thought.*

*The date is set for August.  
Which makes me uneasy.*

*My wife is getting stronger.  
She doesn't wear out nearly as quickly.  
She has more motivation  
And her countenance  
Is much brighter.*

*She has much stress  
Over her mother's death*

*and estate problems.  
Things are better,  
But not necessarily easier.*

*She feels that she has not fully grieved  
Over her mother,  
Because life has been so hectic.  
And dreads the day,  
When it will really hit her.*

*But right now there is a calm  
Before the operation.  
An opportunity for more strength  
To endure the next phase.*

*We are thankful for our Lord  
Who has filled us with His peace  
Throughout this journey.  
For those who He called to help us  
Within our church,  
Both former and present.*

*For my wife,  
Who is battling cancer.  
Twenty-fifth Reflection*

### 30: Uneasiness Again

Uneasiness again.  
Just finished writing  
About the possibility of  
Being cancer free for now.

Then my wife  
Receives a phone call  
Wanting another mammogram  
And MRI  
Since the operation is so far away.  
Maybe nothing; just to make sure.  
Maybe an unpleasant surprise.

My wife tells me when I get home.  
My comments were first,  
Sarcastically,  
"Maybe they need the money"  
Secondly,  
"They probably just need to make sure  
For liability reasons."

I had a student coming in a few minutes,  
So my wife went upstairs.  
She was not happy.  
She said I didn't care.  
I didn't understand.  
What did I say?

Later,  
She said  
All she wanted  
Was for me to look her in the eyes  
And give her a hug.

How thick headed can I be?  
So, I went over,

Looked her in the eyes,  
Apologized,  
And gave her a hug.

She accepted it.  
In my defense,  
I thought I was commiserating with her.  
She understood.  
But she can't understand  
How I can overlook  
That all she just wanted  
Her husband's touch.  
And comfort.

I can't either.  
And I kick myself  
Every time I do it.

Most women who read this  
Probably can't understand either.  
A lot of men can.  
We're dopes,  
When it comes to sensing  
Simple things like that.

I realize that  
I'm an "after thinker".  
I think about all I should have done  
After I failed to do it.

Lord,  
I pray,  
That I may be  
More sensitive.  
At the right time.

For my wife,  
Who may be  
Cancer free.  
Twenty-sixth Reflection



*31: Anniversary Day, 2015*

*Most of what I have written  
Has been written during critical times.*

*It seems that during those periods,  
When just breathing is so difficult  
That I cannot speak,  
I write.*

*It has been quite a year for us.  
Julie is now  
As far as we know  
Cancer free,  
So to speak.*

*She is awaiting August,  
Where she will have a  
Double mastectomy  
As a harsh preventative.  
She is quite concerned  
About the twelve-hour surgery.*

*We have learned through genetic testing  
That she should not have any radiation.  
This part of the cure being neglected  
Warrants the more drastic alternative.*

*But right now,  
There is a calm.  
When Julie heard the news  
That all looks clear,  
She said that it was the first time  
Since last fall  
That she could breathe again.*

*In the meantime,  
Her life is filled with stress  
Dealing with her mother's estate  
And the pain that  
Goes along with it.  
At times she feels like  
She is losing her mind.*

*Every time she has to make a call,  
She must recount  
That her mother, her best friend  
Is no longer with her.  
It is like reliving it each time  
A creditor or the like  
Gives their condolences.  
Whenever she walks into  
Her mother's house,  
She visibly changes.  
What once was filled with  
Her mother's touch  
Her mother's words,  
Her advice, her laughter,  
Her beauty,  
Is now a nearly empty shell.  
With vestiges of her mother's life  
That no one wanted,  
Scattered about in the basement  
And the garage.*

*We are spending many days  
Picking up the pieces.*

*But this weekend  
Is our anniversary.  
She is surviving  
The hardest year of her life.  
And we will rejoice together  
And be thankful  
That we are still together.*

*And still,  
She cried a lot last night.  
She told me that the person  
She sees in the mirror  
She does not recognize.  
I think she is beautiful.  
She doesn't believe me.*

*We hope to forget  
For a few days  
All of the pain of the  
Recent past  
And the anticipation  
Of an unpleasant  
Near future.*

*But we have seen much love,  
From God and His people,  
And each other.  
We hope to dwell on the Good,  
And hold hands,  
And be boyfriend and girlfriend.*

*I am blessed with  
A beautiful woman,  
And have found  
During this time,  
She has expressed  
More beauty  
In the midst of her suffering  
Than I could have imagined.  
Thank you Jesus,  
For my wonderful wife.  
Let me love her,  
As You love me.*

*We will have a happy anniversary, Honey.  
And I want you to know,  
My heart is yours,  
And always will be.*

*For my wife,  
Who, by the Providence of God  
And the love of her friends  
And family,  
And the God-given wisdom  
Of many experts,  
Is beating cancer,  
June 26, 2015  
Twenty-Seventh Reflection*

### 32: *The Burial*

*Friday was the burial.  
The morning was extremely busy for me:  
Working for an hour, and then  
Picking up rose petals from a flower shop,  
Picking up balloons from a party store  
And getting to the gravesite before 11 am.*

*Some may think this sounds more like a wedding.  
Rose petals? Balloons?*

*The previous days were difficult for Julie and I  
In different ways.  
For Julie, she was again reliving the loss of her  
mother.*

*For me, she was saying things that hurt.*

*She had told me that nothing could replace her  
mother.*

*Her mother was her best friend.  
I foolishly told her, while trying to comfort her  
That I could be her friend as well.  
Kind of take the place as best as I can.*

*This week I found that I could not.  
My reactions to her grief,  
My thoughts, or lack of thoughts  
To some of the things she was going through  
Could not compare to her mother.  
I simply did not understand  
Like her mother did.*

*She could have stabbed me,  
And it would have felt better.  
In a way I felt unwanted.  
Useless.  
Like Job's miserable comforters.*

*In a way, Julie's life has been similar  
To Job.  
One thing piled upon another.  
No respite.*

*Each day brings more problems:  
More estate issues,  
Family issues,  
Grief, Pain.  
With the double mastectomy operation  
August 6,  
Looming like a beast.*

*I usually get over things quickly.  
Recovery from the last few evenings  
Is taking longer.  
Mostly because the things she said were true,  
And I felt helpless.*

*The burial was simple,  
And beautiful.  
The encasement was placed in the grave,  
By her brother.  
Julie read a few prayers from  
Her mother's Book of Common Prayer.  
They were wisely and appropriately picked.*

*The petals were dropped lovingly into the small  
grave  
By all present.  
It was quietly moving.  
Beautiful.  
Glenda is a rose in the family  
One of the nicest people I have ever met.*

*The balloons were handed out.  
The kids liked this part.  
One by one,  
We all said something about Glenda.  
Then released our balloons.  
White Balloons.  
I've learned to love White.  
Clean, pure.  
The balloons were sent toward the heavens.  
Rising above the heavy air of the world.  
Kind of like our spirits,*

*When we leave our bodies.  
As Glenda did,  
And rose up to Heaven.*

*I was given the honor to sing a song after this.  
I was more honored to hear Uncle Frank  
Say a beautiful closing prayer after this.  
One thing that touched me was  
That he prayed that all present would come to  
know  
Our Savior,  
So that they too could join Glenda  
In Heaven.*

*Then it was done.  
We watched the caretaker  
Put the dirt over the dust.  
It is a memorial.  
Glenda is in Heaven.  
But it is good for us to have closure.*

*The days after are still hard for Julie.  
But I think a little bit better.*

*I have learned that she is right.  
It was foolish of me to think I could replace her  
mother*

*But this morning I awoke with the thought  
That her mother could not replace me either.*

*I may not be her mother,  
But I am her husband.  
And I give her things  
Her mother never could.*

*We are unique, all of us.  
We were created that way.  
God made us to impact  
Everyone we meet.  
Let us reflect His intent  
In some small way,  
During the brief time  
We walk upon this earth.*

*I am not Glenda,  
But I am honored to be  
Julie's husband.*

*For my wife,  
Who is fighting cancer.  
By the grace of God  
Twenty-Eighth Reflection  
July 13, 2015*

### *33: Tears Flow More Frequently*

*Tears flow more frequently,  
A combination of being  
Overwhelmed by estate problems  
And anticipating  
The twelve-hour operation  
Which is to happen next week.*

*Every joint on her body is sore.  
She called the doctor,  
Who suggested that it may be an effect  
Of the medicine she is taking to fight the cancer.  
So she must go off the medicine one week  
And see.*

*Many tastes, thoughts, smells, things,  
Remind her of her mother.  
The memory is still very raw.  
Her mother had been by her side  
Every moment in every situation in the past.  
Her operation next week  
Will be without her.*

*A garage filled with a mixture of items  
Both from our house and her mother's  
Are supposedly to be sold this week.  
We are preparing another house to be sold  
From the estate.  
She has trouble lifting her arms.  
I am working all week.*

*It must be done.  
Our son is moving in next week  
Temporarily from Tennessee,  
To find work in Michigan.  
He will be storing his stuff  
Temporarily in our garage.  
Which is full.  
This is also a burden  
Weighing upon her.*

*Our son will not be a burden,*

*He is kind and will be helpful.  
She just wants it done,  
Because the next week,  
And the next 6 to 8 weeks  
She will be healing.*

*Healing.*

*Physically,  
The primary goal right now.  
To hopefully prevent the cancer  
From recurring.*

*Mentally,  
Getting the burden of her mother's estate  
Out of the way.  
Which will help, we hope,  
Alleviate some of the sharp memories  
That cut so deeply.  
And the constant decision-making,  
And paying bills, and hidden costs,  
That seem to never end,  
May end.*

*Spiritually,  
Sometimes the "why me?" occurs,  
But not often.  
We rest in the providential hand of God.  
His people remind us  
By their love and kind actions,  
That we are not alone.  
His word, written long ago,  
Remains young and fresh  
And eternal.*

*She understands that this light affliction  
Works for us a more exceeding and  
Eternal weight of glory.  
The hard part though,  
Is that she is in the midst of the affliction,  
And the glory is to come.*

*So though perplexed, She is not in despair,  
And prays that the reality  
May not be as difficult  
As the anticipation that constantly  
Plagues her mind.*

*Last night, on my birthday,  
We visited my mom and dad.  
As we left,  
Their hugs were filled with  
Love and concern for her.  
She saw a concerned look in my dad's eyes.  
She thought it was a look  
That he may not see her again.  
This is her fear.  
She wonders about the result of this surgery.*

*I told her  
That after this surgery is done,  
She will see that those fears were unfounded,  
And we will enjoy many more years  
Together.*

*God has too many things for us to do.  
Together.*

*So, though she dreads next week,  
She looks forward for its fulfillment,  
So her life can move to  
The next chapter.*

*For my wife,  
Who is fighting cancer.  
Twenty-ninth Reflection*

### *34: The Day Before Surgery*

*(I am including these after the fact, for reasons written in this reflection)*

*The day before surgery.  
Worked most of the day.  
When I got home,  
I was hungry, hot, tired and ornery.  
I was nervous all day thinking of tomorrow.  
Sat down for dinner about 8:30.*

*My wife was with family during the day,  
She was also trying to tie up loose ends,  
Before she would be in a state  
Where she could not do any business.*

*I wish I could say that I was comforting.  
I was short with her over some trivial things.  
When she pointed it out to me,  
I was ashamed.  
All I did was break her veneer of calm.*

*Julie is very nervous about this operation.  
She told me that this is the first one  
That she does not see any future ahead.  
She is afraid of being sedated 12 hours,  
And the possibility of not coming out of it.*

*When we went to bed,  
She told me that she did not make her "Five  
Wishes",*

*But wanted to be cremated,  
And wanted the songs  
"Be Still My Soul",  
And "Take Me Home",  
Which is a song I wrote.*

*Then she told me  
That she enjoyed every moment  
Being my wife.*

*You know how uneasy that made me feel?  
I told her that we'll get through this  
And that God has a lot more for us to do  
On this earth.*

*But her words...*

*I could not write this  
Until the surgery was over.  
Sometimes words are frightening  
And you do not want to write things  
You do not want to see happen.  
And thank God,  
It did not!*

*For my wife,  
Who is defeating cancer.  
Thirtieth Reflection*

### 35: Surgery Day

*We were awakened by an alarm  
At 4:30 in the morning.*

*I turned to Julie  
And we hugged  
A long time.*

*Julie drove,  
Since she was more familiar with the way.  
When we got to the parking structure,  
Julie froze. She kept asking,  
Where should we park?  
It shocked me.  
There were empty spots all around.*

*We were 15 minutes late  
She was extremely nervous,  
And snapped at me a few times.*

*Suddenly  
Simple decision-making  
Was difficult for her.  
She was not sure where to go,  
And really did not know how to find out.*

*We were directed to the right place,  
And signed in.  
She immediately asked for a  
"Power of Attorney" form  
To fill out.*

*She checked the time,  
And asked if the Pastor would be here soon.  
He was due to be there in 15 minutes,  
Wanting to be there to pray with her  
Before she was too drugged to comprehend.  
She was then taken in to be prepped for surgery.*

*Pastor Ken was a few minutes early.  
The hospital suggested 6:30 for him to be there.  
But Julie did not go in until 6:15.  
We enjoyed good conversation*

*About Julie, the Church, Politics, and the Bible  
Until 8 AM.*

*When they called us in,  
He had 2 minutes to pray.  
Julie was already drugged,  
And ready for surgery.  
Pastor Ken read some great scriptures,  
Gave her words of comfort,  
And prayed a prayer of faith and hope.*

*She was rushed into surgery,  
We were escorted out.*

*Two hours later  
The first doctor came out.  
The mastectomies were a success.  
Julie was doing well.  
The doctor said Julie had  
Ten hours longer with the plastic surgeon.*

*Surprisingly,  
The surgeon was finished  
Four hours early.  
Ninety minutes later,  
She woke up.  
Kind of.*

*Her first words to me were  
"Did the Pastor come?"  
She then nodded out again.  
A few seconds later she asked  
"Did the Pastor come?"  
I assured her that he did.*

*She reached out through her tubes  
To hold my hand.  
She told everyone that  
I was her wonderful husband.  
Then she asked me,  
"Did the Pastor come?"*



*She was a bit loopy.*

*The medical team then  
Dismantled some equipment  
To move her to ICU  
Where she will be monitored  
Three to five days.*

*When she was settled in,  
A doctor practitioner  
Attempted to ask some questions  
And test a few physical extremities.  
She was partially successful,  
But Julie was out of it.*

*When I was finally free to talk to her,  
I told her that I had some good news and bad  
news.*

*First, she was not in Heaven, as she expected.  
She frowned.  
Secondly, she was stuck with me for a lot more  
years.  
She smiled.  
And then went back to sleep.*

*I let her sleep.  
Tomorrow morning I will be able  
To have conversation with  
My very sore, but relatively coherent,  
Hopefully cured,  
Very beautiful and loving wife.*

*For my wife,  
Who, by the mercy of God  
Is defeating cancer.  
Thirty-first Reflection*

### *36: Recuperation: Friday and Saturday*

*Her pain remains at about  
A level of 6.  
Julie tends to take pain well.  
After all,  
She married me.*

*Day after surgery,  
She remembered that  
The Pastor did indeed visit.*

*Bed rest for Friday and Saturday.  
Caring and watchful nurses in ICU.  
Hands bruised from IV's.  
Seven tubes sown into her body  
Leading to seven sacs for drainage.  
Blood flow monitors.  
Tube packs on legs used to  
Prevent blood clots.  
And large cuts sewn up  
Under belly and breasts.*

*I knew that there was something different about  
Julie  
When she wanted the phone off,  
And wanted to take no calls.  
We actually both enjoyed spending time  
Just spending time together  
Without work or stress.  
(Except on the ride there.  
Drivers are simply rude, selfish and obnoxious.)*

*I made the mistake of telling her  
That the doctor said she was "touch and go"  
For the first 3 days.  
I had to clarify that it was the healing I referred  
to,  
Not her life.*

*Friday and Saturday seemed to coalesce.  
No excitement, just sleep and conversation.  
Less sleep and more conversation on Saturday.  
Uneventful is good.  
Real good.*

*For my wife,  
Who is healing from cancer.  
Thirty-second Reflection*

### 37: Recuperation: Sunday

Sunday church.  
I cannot move ten steps without  
A concerned friend asking about her.  
It is good to be there,  
Sensing the love of God,  
And the love of His children.

Got a text.  
Julie is moving out of ICU.  
On my way to see her,  
I get stuck in a traffic jam.  
I call to let her know.  
She is crying.  
She wants to come home.

She tells me that care is different out of the ICU.  
A seemingly uncaring orderly  
Causes her great pain while getting situated.  
Julie says she acted as if she was afraid to touch  
her.  
This, coupled with a difficult night  
Reminds her of the situation  
Her mother was in at the  
Rehabilitation center.

I'm stuck in traffic,  
She tells me I do not have to come.  
I asked her if she wants me there.  
She says she does, that  
I bring her comfort.  
Makes me feel really good.

When I arrive, she is in better spirits.  
The nurses are very attentive,

Cheery, and helpful.  
One nurse calls her doctor directly  
To answer a question.  
The one bad incident is forgotten.

New orders:  
She must get up and walk around.  
Determined to get out as soon as possible,  
She forces herself up.  
Feels lots of skin stretching.  
Not pleasant.

We walk around her hospital wing.  
A large rectangle.  
Takes about 10 minutes.  
She is sore, but successful.

We have a lot of good conversation,  
I tell her about the church sermon,  
And we talk about the Republican debate.  
Religion and Politics.  
We tend to agree on most things.

Later, I walk her around once more.  
She's tired. Time for me to go.  
We hope to find out the pathology report  
tomorrow.  
We pray that she is healed enough to go home soon.

Two hours later I receive a text, telling me that she  
loves me.  
I'm one lucky guy.  
Looking for many more years with  
My beautiful wife.

For my beautiful wife,  
Who is defeating cancer  
By the grace of God.  
Thirty-third Reflection

### 38: First Week Home

Wakened by the sound of our fan this Monday  
morning  
Today her healing progress will be checked.  
  
Thinking back since she has been home.  
The first day back we heard good news,  
The pathology report was negative.  
As far as they can tell, she was clean.  
  
The rest of the week has been quite uneventful.  
Which to us, is very good.  
Just fitful sleeping, dealing with pain  
Having a klutz learn how to change  
The four drainage bags coming out of her body  
And re-medicating her blistered, bruised left breast.

Sometimes the little bags get stuck in her chair  
As she gets up.  
They let her know quickly as they pull on the  
sutured tubes  
Attached to her body.  
Ouch.  
Some of those entrances are red and sore.  
We use Neosporin on them as well.  
  
We sleep in our Lazy-boys.  
One night she was so uncomfortable  
That she tried the couch.  
She's back in the lazy boy.

She's had four dreams of a fat old man  
Having an affair with a young girl  
At our old church.  
One night I heard her talking in her sleep.  
Or mumbling.  
Loud.  
Stressful.

I figured she was having that dream.  
Curious, I woke her up.  
Big mistake.

I asked her what she was dreaming about.  
"YOU!!!" she said, in a very accusing manner.  
And then proceeded to tell me all the rotten things  
I was doing  
This time I was talking about this beautiful young  
girl in front of her.

I took her hand, and told her that I was her  
dreamboat,  
And my heart was hers forever.  
Not that fat old man in the dream.  
She at least agreed that I was a boat.  
I prayed with her,  
That she would not have that silly dream again.  
She hasn't complained about it since.

One day,  
She told me that this whole experience made her  
think  
About how she was not getting any younger,  
And since her mom and dad were now in heaven,  
She had no real ties to this place any more.  
That maybe we might consider moving away.  
I did not know what to say,  
So I said something like,  
"Well, my mom and dad are still here".  
And the conversation ended.  
Not sure if it was just a moment of sad reflection,  
Or if she was serious.  
But I have put it in prayer.

Providentially,  
This was the week our son Joel  
Moved back to Michigan to get things ready  
For his life with his wife  
As she goes to school in this area  
He has been a blessing,  
Helping us with the practical things  
And doing whatever we ask of him.  
It is truly amazing how God works.

*Well, there you go.  
The excitement of the week,  
Hopefully next week  
Will be as exciting as last week,  
And she will continue to heal,  
And we can begin the next step  
In our lives together,  
Abiding in Christ,  
Remembering these moments,  
And learning from them.*

*For my beloved wife,  
Who may be cancer free,  
By the mercy of God.  
Thirty-fourth Reflection  
8-17-15*

*A New Beginning!*

*Written by Paul M. McKenzie  
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I hope this will be a comfort to others who have been suffering.  
There is eternal hope.*