

Thank you Rabbi Lyon, Rabbi Miller, Rabbi Scott and Cantor Mutlu for asking me to participate in this special service on Yom Kippur.

In thinking about today, I remembered my father's letters that he wrote for his children and grandchildren describing what life was like for Jews living in Germany in the 1930's. I will admit that rereading those letters was not easy for me.

As a young married couple, my parents moved from Germany to Amsterdam in 1934 because of the pending Nazi threat to the Jews of Germany. My parents with their 2 year old son left Holland in 1938 for the United States not knowing if they would ever again see their families. Of course they tried to persuade their parents to join them, but were unsuccessful. My father's parents and my maternal grandfather were captured by the Nazis and ultimately died in the camps. My maternal aunt and grandmother were also captured and transported to the camps but vivaciously survived. While interred, both my grandmother and aunt dedicated their lives to helping others in the camp. My grandmother told me that was how she maintained her self-respect. It was those activities that allowed them to survive. Their determination to live during this horrible experience not only demonstrated their strength but also their basic belief in God that they would be saved. Their experience and their ability to overcome this adversity has been a major influence in my life. A year and half after the end of the war they were finally able to locate my parents and joined them in Dallas. Today, my aunt's prison uniform is on display at the Dallas Holocaust Museum.

When my parents came to Dallas they were met by The Self Help, a group of German Jews, that settled in Dallas, who brought food, clothing, toys, and household goods to the new families.

Our Jewish holidays were spent with friends from these groups and even though many have passed away, my mother, who is 97, still maintains friendships with their children. As our family grew from 4 to 6 in a small house with the family business in the front room, a children's clothing store, my Aunt continued her medical career which she had begun prior to being captured. During this time my grandmother also took on jobs to help cover their living expenses and became my second Mother. At this time my father was dealing with numerous illnesses which left the management of the store to my Mother, as well as managing the daily family life. Again determination, strength to face a difficult situation and belief in God helped them with managing their daily life.

As a child I often heard stories about life before the war and during the war but never really understood how hard life had been for them. Now I certainly have a better understanding and I know that their determination, as well as the spirit to live through a horrible time, has definitely given me the strength to deal with my own issues.

My aunt became a highly respected cancer researcher with the Wadley Research Institute and was a member of the team who helped with the discovery of the drug Interferon. My grandmother became a beloved member of the medical community as a medical translator and librarian. I was heavily influenced by the efforts of both my aunt and grandmother to donate time and resources to help others in the Dallas community. I particularly remember my aunt's efforts in caring for her patients suffering from leukemia and helping the families emotionally, as well as financially. During my holiday and summer vacations I would assist my grandmother in preparing gift baskets for the patients and would accompany my aunt as she made her weekend hospital visits. I vividly remember the children lying in their beds weak from the disease. Little did I know how these memories would affect me later in life. The patients faces would brighten when we entered their hospital room as they felt that Dr. Ellen would be able to find a cure for their blood cancer. She felt that it was her responsibility, as she had been given a second chance at life.

Our family felt it was important to be part of the Dallas Jewish community and to live a Jewish life openly, although many impacted by the holocaust shunned their Jewish heritage. My Jewish education at Temple Emanu-el continued through Confirmation and I know that many of my basic beliefs of helping others and trying to improve the community through Tzadukah were established in those early school years.

My husband and I were married in 1966 after completing our studies at UT. I graduated from the Undergraduate School of Social Work and Dan received his law degree. During the ensuing 20 years we lived in Newport, Rhode Island; Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles and San Jose, California. In each community we joined a congregation and our children, Michael and Rebecca, continued their Jewish education, as well as giving us an extended Jewish family. We still maintain wonderful friendships from those years. In each city I participated in many community service activities as I felt it gave me a connection to our new city.

Helping others in the community is one of Judaism's basic beliefs and will always be a part of my daily life. When my husband's career brought us to Houston in 1988, I worked at the Jewish Federation where I became familiar with many of Houston's Jewish organizations.

I had only been in Houston for 3 days when I attended a joint meeting of Beth Israel Sisterhood and National Council of Jewish Women. I soon became involved with National Council of Jewish Women and served on the board promoting the mission of NCJW. Sisterhood has also given me the opportunity to serve on their board and to work on fundraising activities and enjoy the other events promoted by Sisterhood.

I also feel that it is important to be involved in the Houston cultural community and have been an active member of Houston Ballet Guild, served on the board of the University of Houston's Moores School of Music. In 2008, I was named as an ABC/Channel 13 A Women of Distinction for my community service. This year I will continue my role as President for the Texas Gulf Coast Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and will also serve as co-chair for the Crohn's and

Colitis major fundraiser for 2012. My participation in all these groups has been a rewarding experience.

In 1999, I was diagnosed with a form of leukemia. It is impossible to describe the fear and anger. I remembered the suffering I had observed when visiting the sick children with my Aunt when she made her weekend visits. Anyone faced with a cancer diagnosis is concerned how this will affect their life and family.

Accompanying me at MD Anderson after learning of the diagnosis, my husband promised me I would never spend one minute alone in that building – that he would be there with me for every doctor's appointment and every treatment. During the years of treatment my friends offered to go with me but Dan would not permit it, as we are a team and we will be there for each other. I also remembered how my parents, grandmother and aunt had faced adversity and overcame it through determination. Had I been diagnosed with the disease two or three years earlier, the prognosis would have been a two to four year life expectancy. Fortunately, research had progressed and I was able to participate in a clinical trial for a new drug, Rituxan, at MD Anderson. Dan's positive outlook refused to refer to my condition as Leukemia with the connotation of a fatal disease instead we called it a blood disorder which could be easily treated.

The first round of treatments, although scheduled over a six month period, actually took a year to complete. I was determined that my life would not be affected by the disease or the course of the treatments. During that year of treatment I helped with the planning of our daughter's wedding as well as increasing my involvement in community service. I fought the disease on two fronts. First, in my own body, aided by the chemotherapy and second, against the disease itself by becoming active in the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society which is devoted exclusively to blood cancer research.

At first, the treatments appeared to be completely successful. I was in full remission for over 6 years and the 254 patients in the trial study had averaged 5 years of remission. I thought the disease was behind me. However, in November 2007 my blood numbers indicated that the disease had returned. and I would need to go through another 6-8 months of treatment. Of course this is not the news you ever want to hear, but the doctors did feel that we could wait for 2 or 3 months to start the treatment and suggested that we could go on our planned vacation to Greece. Nonetheless, before even leaving the hospital, we decided to delay the trip and I started treatment the following week. Each time I am faced with a difficult life situation I once again remember the determination of my family in overcoming their own life threatening problems. Our hope was that upon completion of the treatments in 2008 that I would enjoy another 5 or 6 years of remission.

My daily routine did slow down but not my numerous volunteer jobs. The work gave me a sense of being needed and that I was not the person in need.

In 2010, the leukemia returned for yet a third time. I was extremely upset at the prospect of going through treatment again. I was even reluctant to be treated again. Dan's attitude was positive as always, saying that I would get through it easily - he would say that we know the drug works, we know you can tolerate the drug and we know where to park cheaply at Anderson, so just do it. Of course, he did not have the nausea and the tiredness but we are there for each other so I tried to continue with our active life. I was determined to enjoy my grandson, Adam's, bar mitzvah celebration last fall with family and friends. During the treatment I continued my job as President of Houston Ballet Guild and President of The Texas Gulf Coast Chapter of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. I have now completed the treatments and plan to enjoy my family, my volunteer work and my hobbies and traveling with Dan.

Dr Keating, Dr Koller and the researchers at MD Anderson and other leading hospitals are hard at work searching for new cures for blood cancers. I understand these cures are also valuable in treating other forms of cancer as well. There are two exciting new drugs currently in clinical trial at MD Anderson and the results so far are very promising. In my mind, there is a race between this research and the leukemia cells lurking in my bone marrow.

I will win this race.

It is easy to question the existence or motives of God when faced with the horrors of a holocaust or a life-threatening disease. I believe that with a strong belief in God and yourself that you can survive and find a way to live a productive and happy life.

I am sure others in this congregation have been faced with a difficult life situation and have eventually, through the help of family, friends and our Jewish beliefs, found a way to continue on with their daily lifestyle. As my family overcame their problems, I too can deal with this illness.

Our son, Michael and his family, have also helped with my fundraising for leukemia. They live in Bellaire and are very involved with their sons Matthew and Adam.

Our daughter, Rebecca, and her husband live in Colorado and are busy with 5 year old active twin boys. I know that when Rebecca has time she will become involved with her community.

As Dan and I enter our 46th year of marriage we know that we have worked hard together to set examples for our children and that if you face a difficult situation, do not let it overtake you, but continue to work toward reaching your goals.

My goal for the rest of my life is to promote fundraising campaigns to fund the research that will soon find a cure for blood cancer and all other forms of cancer.

A special thank you to Dan for always being there for me, for supporting all my volunteer work.

Again to the rabbis, my friends and to the congregation thank you for giving me this opportunity to tell my story .

I wish each of you a happy and healthy New Year.