

**Missy Whalen
Celebration of Life
12.1.14**

{WORDS FROM MISSY'S FAMILY}

I wanted to start tonight by sharing a few words from Missy's family...

They would like to thank all of Missy's work family at Hutton and Hutton, where she worked her entire career. It was a very caring workplace that went above and beyond taking care of Missy and the family during treatments and trips to MD Anderson. Special thanks to Mark and Andy Hutton and particularly her dear friend and boss Ann Hull.

Additionally, it was a blessing that neighbor Jenny Ridder entered Missy's life. Jenny was a godsend who provided support from all angles - friend, confidant, maintenance around the house, helping hand, caregiver, spiritual caretaker, dog caregiver, and overall go-to person to get whatever Missy needed done.

Jenny shares a lot of the same qualities that Missy had as far as being a caring person that always looked after others first...and always doing it with a smile.

She even followed Missy's oncologist on Twitter, organized Missy's Watchdogs, and earned the nickname "Dr. Google" because she eagerly researched anything and everything she could to help Missy.

Most importantly, we'd like to thank Missy's lifelong best friend Lori (Schmitz) Mull, who were inseparable from the day they met...and all the way to the very end.

We'd also like to thank Lori's husband Jeramy, who was like a surrogate brother, always there and always willing to do all sorts of home improvement projects that really helped Missy out.

To the countless others, thank you so much for the prayers, cards, calls, emails, texts and offers of support. There are no words to adequately capture how much that has meant to our family.

Finally, what we will always remember about Missy, and what we want you to remember, is her unique ability to always **CHOOSE TO BE HAPPY** and **CHOOSE TO BE POSITIVE**.

{EULOGY – MIC JOHNSON}

Dick, Margie, Katie and Chris...To you and your families, we are so very sorry for your loss.

And while our hearts are heavy, they are also full of love for you and for our friend Missy.

I'm unbelievably humbled that you asked me to speak today. It's simply one of the greatest honors of my entire life.

But I have to be honest. In the days leading up to tonight, I had several moments where I felt completely inadequate for this responsibility and doubted my ability to even be able to stand up here and get through this.

How could I possibly come up with the words to accurately capture what Missy meant to all of us...and what she meant to me?

But each time I doubted, I quickly stopped myself and realized that it wasn't whether I COULD do it... It was that I HAD to do it... for you...for everyone here tonight... and, most importantly, for Missy.

I received a text from Lori last Wednesday that said:

“Missy passed away very peacefully at 6:45 a.m. this morning.”

Not too long after that I got a message from Missy's brother Chris saying "It's time to celebrate a life." I was amazed and inspired by that perspective during such a trying time.

And you know what? Chris was absolutely right. And so I'm here tonight to tell all of you... THAT is what tonight and tomorrow are all about. It's a celebration of the person that Missy was and how she has left an indelible imprint on all of our lives.

And while our collective pain is real at this very moment, knowing that we have come together to celebrate the life of an incredible daughter/granddaughter/sister/aunt and friend gives me a calming sense of perspective and peace.

I talked to Lori recently to get some perspective on Missy that many of us may not know because very few people, if any, knew Missy quite like Lori did.

Lori said that Missy loved knitting and would spend a lot of her downtime making things for people...on Thursday nights she would even go to a knitting group she belonged to at The Heritage Hut that was (and I quote) “just a bunch of little old ladies and Missy.”

Missy was also actively involved in a book club as she really loved to read. She also loved books on tape...anytime she was driving, she didn't have the radio on...she would listen to a book...And if it wasn't a book, she'd listen to NPR.

Over the years Missy had become quite the homebody...and loved to spend time relaxing at home with her dogs Dottie and Libby. That's where she was most comfortable and that's where she liked to stay.

She loved going to her nieces and nephews games and really enjoyed eating sunflower seeds....Ranch-flavored were her favorite.

Most weekends she would spend time at her parents' house...and spent a lot of time going to movies and shopping with her mom...those weekends were definitely one of Missy's favorite past times.

Lori also wanted everyone to know that Missy was very devoted to her family and friends, and got a lot of joy from spending time with them.

Ok, now we all know that Missy could also be stubborn and she NEVER wanted to be the center of attention. She was always more comfortable behind the scenes...being her awesome self without much pomp or circumstance.

In fact, I can assure you...and I know we have several friends here that will back me up on this....that Missy would be downright nervous...and borderline scared.... knowing that not only am I the one up here talking about her today...but that I also have an audience...and a microphone.

I can almost hear her now telling us not to make too much of a fuss over her tonight.

Well we're sorry Missy, but that's exactly what we're going to do. That's the reward you get for a lifetime of being the kind of person you were and because of the countless lives you've touched.

I've known Missy my entire life and I met her here...at St. Francis of Assisi where we went to grade school together. In fact we all played kickball, dare base, and bombardment right out in that parking lot out there.

That's where our friendship began...and it continued through high school at Bishop Carroll...and beyond.

Missy has always been like a sister to me. She was one of those friends where no matter how much time had passed, we always picked up right where we left off.

We had a bond that was forged by nearly 40 years of friendship that included many memories, laughter, and yes even a few tears.

One of the things about me is that I love making people laugh. And I REALLY loved making Missy laugh.

In fact, as I reflected over the last several days, I realized that I don't have ANY memories of Missy where we weren't laughing. How cool is that?

Seeing her eyes light up, a smile enveloping her face, and hearing that infectious laugh that was so unique to Missy... was absolutely intoxicating. For the rest of my life, I'm going to remember that infectious laugh of hers.

I remember when Lori first called me in July and told me about Missy's diagnosis. When I hung up the phone, I was overcome with wave after wave of emotion coupled with an intense feeling of helplessness.

I wanted to be there. I wanted to hug her. I wanted her to know how much she meant to me...but I also wanted to be respectful of what she was going through and allow her the space and time she needed.

So I sent her an email telling her exactly how I felt and offered to do whatever I could to help.

I was told later that the email really touched her and made her smile.
Mission accomplished.

It wasn't long after I sent the email that Missy and I got to speak on the phone. We talked, laughed, and I attempted to inspire her and give her hope as she faced the difficult road ahead.

I cherished that time to talk to her then, but I cherish it even more now, and will for the rest of my life, because it was the last time I ever got to talk to her.

One of Missy's greatest characteristics was that she was always quick to help...yet never quick to ask for help.

And with that in mind I know that Missy would want me to take a moment to personally thank Jenny Ridder, Lori Mull and JJ Sorochty. They did so much to support Missy and her family over the last several months.

They are the epitome of what it means to be friends, giving selflessly of their time to help Missy and her family however they could.

And Lori and JJ also served as my lifeline to Missy....texting, emailing and calling me with the latest information so I could share it with others.

Those of you that know me well know that I've experienced quite of bit of loss in my life, the most significant being the loss of my dad to cancer when he was 46 and I was 23.

They say there are universal stages of grief that we all must go through...Denial and Isolation, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and finally Acceptance.

I'm not sure how or why, but over the years I've learned to somewhat "fast forward" through those initial stages and quickly get to a place of acceptance.

As I thought about what I would say tonight, I felt an obligation to try to help everyone...just like Missy would want me to.

With that in mind, I want to give you two things to think about as you move forward in the days, weeks, months and years ahead. Both have helped me in the past as I've dealt with loss.

First, don't ask WHY, because, as difficult as it is, we will never get the answer to that question.

Second, I want each and every one of you to ask yourselves...

What would Missy want?

-I believe she would want us to celebrate her life.

-I believe she would want us to comfort one another.

-I believe she would want us to tell each other our favorite stories of time we spent with her.

-I believe she would want us to immediately let go of any thoughts of regret...of things we should have said or done...or how we should have picked up the phone or gotten together more often.

-I believe she would want us to laugh... and if we cried, to not do it for long... and then get back to laughing.

-I believe she would want us to make the most of the time we have left, to live each day to the fullest, to pursue our passions, to be good people, to be loyal to our friends and family, and to do everything we can to make sure we leave a positive and lasting impression on people.

-I believe she would want all of us to **CHOOSE TO BE HAPPY** and **CHOOSE TO BE POSITIVE.**

In the end, that's what life is all about...that's what Missy's life was all about...it was about experiencing life with the people you love and care about the most.

So tonight and from this day forward, let's hold on tightly to the memory of the kind and selfless person Missy was.

And let's all agree to honor Missy and her memory by being the best human beings we can be.

Thank you for being one of the very best friends I've ever had. Our loss is most certainly Heaven's gain. Rest in peace my friend, knowing that we're all going to be ok, we all love you, and that your spirit will live on in all of us.

In closing, I want to share a poem that I read at my own father's funeral nearly 20 years ago. It's been a source of comfort and inspiration for me for years...and I hope that it can be for you too.

It's called ATTITUDE.

ATTITUDE

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on my life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company, a church, a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The

only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitudes.

{WORDS FROM MARK HUTTON –
HUTTON AND HUTTON}

As I search for words to describe Missy, many virtuous thoughts come mind. Missy was the quintessential professional who executed her job as a paralegal with both passion and intensity. Missy listened to the plights of many, many victims of misfortunes and provided them with the comfort and the ear that was sorely needed.

Missy's brilliance and intensity made her a perfectionist. Missy authored letters and legal pleadings which were signed by counsel as if it were their original work product. Missy in essence practiced law. Missy made all the attorneys she worked with appear to be exceedingly literate and highly accomplished drafters of technical legalese.

Invariably, our clients would inform us how much they liked Missy and thanked us for having her simply listen to all of their problems, whether legal or personal.

Missy had a calming voice, a voice of reason and a voice of understanding that helped the office staff and the hard-charging lawyers to better listen to each other. Missy helped reduce stress in a litigation oriented law firm. Missy smile was infectious and needed.

Often I would ask Missy for advice how to make the office run more smoothly and I cherished her wisdom. Missy always took the high road in resolving issues among staff. There is a hole in my heart.

Missy will always be remembered. God needed help so he called for Missy.

We will be establishing a living memorial in Missy's name as the Missy Whalen memorial scholarship at WSU for Bishop Carroll students.

As a father of a son who attended and played football for Kapaun high school Missy and I would discuss which was the better Catholic high school. Missy was so gracious to me during football season about Bishop Carroll always beating Kapaun. After each blistering defeat Missy would kindly say "maybe next year will be Kapaun's time. Well Missy --in recognition of the superiority of Bishop Carroll over Kapaun--only Bishop Carroll students will be eligible for your scholarship.