

Making a Difference



Women's Lives (A Little More Jenn Coffey of New Hampshire)

By *Genie Jennings,*
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The past few weeks I have been very aware of the changes women go through as they progress through life. That is because for the past few weeks I have been taking care of, first, my daughter's two dogs and two cats, and, now, the two dogs, two cats and a 14-month-old!

There is a reason we have our children at the time we do. When the mother of the child who is currently (but sporadically) sleeping upstairs in my house was even younger than this, my husband and I purchased the three-story Victorian house we would convert to a bed-and-breakfast. Her older sister was almost 5.

During the ensuing summers it was not unusual for me to be up past midnight doing laundry and up before 6 am to brew coffee and begin breakfasts. In the off-season I was a full-time Mom, which meant volunteering for everything the school needed, until the girls were in junior and

senior high and I began almost full-time substitute teaching.

I am awestruck by the woman I used to be with the energy she used to have! Perhaps, had she been a tad more sparing in her energy usage I would have more today, but somehow I do not think it works that way. Young people have more energy! Even a 30-year-old has trouble keeping up with a 2-year-old. Of course, the 2-year-old gets to take naps and the 30-year-old needs that time to catch up on all the things she has not had a chance to do during the 2-year-old's awake time. Add a few decades to the equation and the adult has no chance.

When we have left a certain "stage" in our lives it is hard to remember it accurately. We may remember we hurt, but we don't remember actual pain. It seems that the same goes for exhaustion. We remember we were very tired, but do not get the sense of how it feels to be constantly swamped. That is what these days have brought into my memory. I have the great advantage/disadvantage that this is my granddaughter and not my own child. I am following the "owner's manual" my daughter typed out for me. I will be a good parent and do it her way. Not having to agonize

over decisions relieves much of the burden of child-raising.

This was just to remind you of what it is like during a period that any mother knows. All of us--parent or not--knows what it is like to balance jobs, family/friends, home. Then, we would like to throw in a little outside activity like belonging to a club or volunteering. Oh, yeah. And, then there are the strictly personal things such as a manicure, or time to exercise or read a book.

I don't know a single woman who has ever put herself first on the list of things to do...except for very occasional times. (This is one of the benefits of getting older. We have fewer family demands and eventually do not have the work demands. Then we can sometimes slip in the "me" things.)

Causes also become consuming. The best thing that has happened to the pro-gun movement over the last decades is the inclusion of women. I am not denigrating the work and passion of the men who have been battling for our rights for the past half-century. However, women seldom enter a group setting with an idea of sitting quietly in the back row. At least not once they have gotten an idea of what things are about. Women

were the ones who congregated in the kitchen: first preparing, then serving and finally cleaning up. Men gathered in the den to have a drink and talk. Traditionally, men might debate whether the glass is half-full or half-empty; women know it will have to be cleaned, regardless.

Women work. Genetically, we tend to put others and important things ahead of ourselves. Until we are stopped.

Which is a really, really long introduction to my subject. Last year, I told part of Jenn Coffey's

important.

However, no matter how busy, how dedicated a woman might be, no matter how busy and crowded her schedule might be, life sometimes steps in front and yells, "STOP."

Breast cancer. There is not a woman who does not understand. Jenn stopped. Momentarily. Then, in true Jenn Coffey fashion, she shared.

"Update on this last day in August 2013, I am having surgery in Boston. In addition to the cancer, a 2nd area—not

with not only having Breast Cancer, but being able to say it out loud without tears or anger has finally happened for me, most of the time. It is easy to sit behind a computer and type. However, saying it out loud you feel it more, at least I do. It is acceptance and learning to slow down my mind to deal with the negative, and even joke about it. My latest one is to tell people I am going in for a tummy tuck and a lift. Sorry, if that sounds crude but it is my truth. It comes down to choice, and I choose to joke around, and selfishly enjoy my time with family and friends that usually is hard to find the time for. ((hugs to all))."

When something monumental happens to someone who has spent a large amount of time and energy, a big chunk of precious life, on public or work matters, there is always a question of whether they regret the time spent on such activities. That was the question I had in the back of my mind. Would she have done it differently?

I never had to ask, but I did get a rueful chuckle out of another Facebook status as a major national crisis broke: "I don't have time for breast cancer!" The indomitable spirit comes through: fighters fight. Jenn fights whatever is in her way.

I am happy to report that Jenn has had her surgery at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, MA. She was able to report "clean borders" and is on her way to recovery. You can follow her blog <jenncoffey16.blogspot.com> and friend her on Facebook for further updates.

W&G



Opening page of former NH Rep. Jenn Coffey's blog page.

story and promised there would be more forthcoming. My plan was to have Jenn explain step-by-step how she proceeded in passing one piece of knife-protection legislation.

Things change. As happened to many conservative activist legislators across the country, last fall, Jenn lost her re-election to the New Hampshire legislature. Second Amendment proponents can be extremely pleased with what she accomplished in her brief time of legislative service. Someday we will get back to that part of Jenn's story, because blueprints for passing bills are

near the cancer, but on the same side—was found a group of precancerous cells. I will have to have a mastectomy. Any other choice leaves me at an increased risk for a recurrence. However, we are now almost a month since the genetic test was drawn and waiting for the results is difficult, because it changes the surgery and the inpatient time. I am still bruised up and sore from the last biopsy. So all in all it is frustrating, but at the same time, a relief. This last week with family and friends has given me a chance to think, relax, and heal. Coming to terms