



Nancy Chavez
A Mother's

On the morning of September 9, 2002, Nancy Chavez watched with pride and satisfaction as her daughter Randi walked down the aisle towards her groom and their future together as husband and wife. Like all mothers, Nancy wanted Randi to enjoy a peaceful, happy life, surrounded by family, friends, and love. Nancy's marriage had been a stark contrast to what she hoped for her daughter, and Chavez had worked tirelessly to ensure that her daughter would not experience the isolation, abuse, and fear that had permeated her own married life.

Nancy Chavez, director of the Pennsylvania Weed and Seed Program, through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, was born in Topeka, Kansas, in 1955. Her grandparents had moved there after working to build the railroad at the Rio Grande in Mexico. Nancy, her parents, and three sisters were the first Mexican-American family to settle in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, when her father was transferred from the Air Force Base in Alabama to the Navy Depot in 1963. The community gave them a warm welcome.

Nancy's family valued education and she did well in school. In 1973, after graduating from Cumberland Valley High School, Nancy attended Harrisburg Area Community College and worked at a local grocery store. Not long after, an opportunity

came for her to see the group Chicago in concert at the Farm Show complex with a blind date that her sister had arranged. Chavez and her date immediately hit it off, and "before I knew it I was falling in love. I packed my bags and followed him to Virginia where he served in the navy. I thought it was the right thing to do." The couple married on January 11, 1974.

What initially seemed like a romantic fairy tale quickly turned sour. "The marriage was abusive but I was determined to make it work. I convinced everyone that we had a wonderful life. I gave birth to my beautiful baby daughter, Randi Lee, on December 15, 1974." Yet living in fear became a way of life for Nancy. She was threatened, beaten, and berated when her husband was at home. He left for months at a time and she was just as frightened when he was gone. "Fear lived in my heart and kept me paralyzed. Having my daughter exposed to that violent environment – seeing it – hearing it – is the part that hurt the most. Finally, in 1979, I found the courage to move my daughter back home. Randi was five years old and ready to begin kindergarten."

During the following years, Nancy dedicated her life to raising her daughter and to a career in state government. Nancy went back to college and attended evening classes for 15 years. Her hard work paid off and in 1988 she earned a bachelor of arts in

science and a master's degree in public administration in 1995 from Penn State University. In those challenging times Nancy and Randi worked as a team. "We spent many hours studying together at the kitchen table. We were both very disciplined."

Randi attended Trinity High School in Camp Hill, where she loved music and was the school's drum major. She graduated in June 1993 and entered Bloomsburg State College the following fall. "She hated college. She was miserable being away from me," remembers Nancy. Nevertheless, "Randi studied hard and received a full scholarship in speech pathology, was the drum

major there as well, and received her degree in 1999. I was so proud of her."

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In the months following college, Nancy watched her daughter continue to achieve and excel. "She completed her internship at Hershey Medical Center, worked at the Masonic Homes in Elizabethtown, and then returned to the Medical Center. She was a dedicated practitioner and people still come up to me to tell me how she helped them."

Some years earlier, in 1995 Randi had met Brian Trimble at the Army Depot where they both worked with children in the day-care center. They dated, and it was during this time that Brian was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). Undaunted by the news, the couple became engaged after five years together. Both families welcomed the impending wedding. Before they married Randi purchased a house two blocks from Nancy, who had grown close to Brian and was mentoring him with his career. Then Randi and Brian were married in September 2002.

Life was wonderful for the newlyweds. Their careers were solid. Brian returned to college and worked at Capital Blue Cross in the Information Technology department. The couple was concerned that MS would affect Brian's ability to have children, but the doctors treated the disease as a general condition that would not affect fertility. Nancy was excited at the idea of having a grandchild in her future.

Nancy spent much of the year 2002 traveling. "I was filling my 'empty nest' and I went on five trips that year. I spent Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year with my daughter and in January 2003 I went on a cruise. The last day of the cruise ended in sadness. My best friend led me to believe that a member of her family was ill and we had to return to Camp Hill immediately."

The two women made their way off the ship and caught an

early plane. "All I remember is walking off the plane. I was taken to a meditation room at the airport and told that my daughter had been murdered the evening of January 10, and that Brian had found her in the garage when he returned from work. She had been strangled with Christmas tree lights and stabbed 27 times. She didn't have a chance."

As the nightmare unfolded, investigators discovered that Nancy's son-in-law had orchestrated the horrific murder, hiring his best friend Blaine Norris to kill Randi. "My daughter's life was stolen from me as a result of her husband's selfish ploy to

murder her for the sake of his freedom and her \$100,000 life insurance policy. It all came down to the simple task of the planned execution. They replicated instructions from a hit man website. Both were involved in video games, Dungeons & Dragons, horror films, and death. Norris wanted to kill another human being and Trimble wanted his freedom. Both are serving life [sentences in prison] without parole."

In spite of a lifetime spent working to ensure that Randi would have every possible advantage, Nancy was unable to prevent her daughter's murder. Yet she is determined that Randi's death, and more importantly her life, not be in vain. Nancy has organized Randi's Race: A 5K

Run/Walk for Hope and Courage, and has raised more than \$149,000 to support the Domestic Violence Services of Cumberland and Perry Counties.

Nancy has been journaling since the day Randi was born and is writing a book in her daughter's honor. It will benefit Randi's House of Angels, a non-profit organization that will be a healing place for children of all ages to receive counseling and break the cycle of victimization and abuse. Nancy's legacy, through her boundless and unconditional love for her daughter, epitomizes the journey of overcoming obstacles, as well as provides a haven that will protect and heal our children, our fragile future.

Her love and vision are an inspiration. ❀

Mikell Worley is the founder and president of Mikell's Treasures. She has spent more than 20 years designing and delivering self-improvement trainings, has had several cover stories in various magazines, and recently illustrated her first children's book. She is an advocate for women and children.

Walk of Hope & Courage

