

INTRODUCTION

A MOMENT OF TRUTH



Dedicated to Bettye Jean Manee and the memory of Harry. We are eternally grateful to you for letting us share your story.

-Steve Riley

Life is full of potential turning points, moments when a single experience can radically change the course of your entire future. They can happen when you least expect them, and sometimes, if you're not careful, you can miss these opportunities altogether.

I had one of those moments a year ago. I had invited my Aunt Bettye Jean over for some burgers on the grill. Her husband of 51 years, Harry, had died six months earlier. Losing Harry was something we knew was going to happen because he had been fighting a battle with cancer for six years.

I was preparing a salad when Aunt Bettye Jean walked in, and she joined me in the kitchen.

"I was just thinking about Uncle Harry," I said after welcoming her. "We all knew he was going to pass away, but none of us were prepared for how much we would miss him."

Bettye Jean agreed. "Everyone talks about missing Harry, even his golfing buddies. And all the younger children in the family keep telling me how they wish he was still here."

I nodded. Everybody loved Harry. But I knew that my Aunt was the one who missed him the most. They had been married for 51 years, and had

been sweethearts in high school and college. In fact, they had started out together in elementary school. They both graduated from the University of Florida and were proud to be “Gators.”

My dad was Bettye Jean’s brother, and when I, Pamela Elizabeth Chambers, was born, they immediately nicknamed me Pec because of my initials.

“A penny for your thoughts, Pec?” my Aunt said, noticing my mind was elsewhere.

“I was remembering when I first was married, how you and Uncle Harry were such an example to us.” I replied.

At that moment, my husband, Dub, came in from the patio with a plate of burgers. Dub’s name was Willard, but like me, he had a nickname. Dub and I had kept a close eye on Bettye Jean after Harry’s passing. He walked over and gave Aunt Bettye Jean a hug.

“What are you two ladies talking about?” He asked.

“Losing Harry.” Aunt Bettye Jean replied.

Dub stood still and said, “I’ll never forget the day you called us and asked us to go with you to see Steve Riley because you knew you had legal issues to take care of and didn’t know where to start.”

Bettye Jean had *always* been asking us to go with her and Harry to visit Attorney Steve Riley. I knew they had been with his law firm, The Strategic Counsel, for over sixteen years. Harry had mentioned that Steve had the extraordinary ability to clarify what they needed to do to plan for their future, and Harry was the type of man who wanted to be certain his wife was taken care of in the event that something should happen to him. Bettye Jean not only liked to call Steve her “knight in legal armor,” but also her trusted friend.

I looked at my tall, handsome husband, and I thought how he always, *always* did everything in his power to love and protect me; just like Uncle Harry did for his beloved wife. I felt sad knowing how difficult it was for my Aunt without her husband by her side.

“I don’t know what I would do if anything ever happened to Dub,” I said.

“I know just how you feel,” said my Aunt, gently. “I went through similar fears when we found out that Harry’s cancer was terminal. We never discussed finances, but when he became ill, his top priority was that I would be taken care of when he was no longer there to do it himself.”

“That’s just like Uncle Harry,” I mused.

Aunt Bettye Jean and I put the finishing touches on the table, and as we sat down to enjoy our meal, Dub reminisced.

“I remember the drive to The Strategic Counsel, how you kept telling me that you didn’t know what questions to ask. Do you remember how that meeting went?”

He turned to me and said, “Pec, when we sat down with Aunt Bettye Jean’s attorney, we didn’t have to ask any questions. *Everything* was prepared for her in a notebook, outlined, showing who to contact, and all the what, when and where’s answered. I knew right then and there that this was what I wanted for you, should something happen to me.”

“I liked Steve from the moment I met him,” Bettye Jean interjected. “Harry and I didn’t feel that we had enough money to work with an estate planning attorney. But we were impressed with him because he wasn’t a lawyer-lawyer looking to take advantage of us. He was just there to help people.”

He wasn’t a lawyer-lawyer ... I could see that Dub liked that.

“Each year, they have valuable meetings,” Aunt Bettye Jean went on. “They keep all my legal documents updated, and I don’t have to worry about a thing.”

This information was especially interesting to me, because I know many widows who told me they have NEVER had a meeting with their attorneys!

It then occurred to me that all those meetings must be costly.

“And it’s not even expensive,” continued Aunt Bettye Jean, who apparently was reading my mind. “I pay a nominal annual fee, so they don’t charge me when I ask questions. I can update my plan at anytime, and they always answer me promptly and courteously. They have created a process unlike any other law firm. It’s called The Family Protector Program™, and it’s designed to protect families in a world of constant change.”

“This all sounds great,” I shared. “But I’m not sure that we have enough money for an important estate planning attorney to want our business.”

“That’s exactly how I felt, but Steve’s the kind of guy who makes you feel rich, no matter how much money you have,” she said.

I could see how impressed Dub was by Steve and his team, and how much Bettye Jean trusted this law firm.

After dinner and goodbyes, I turned to Dub and asked him if we could go talk to Steve. He agreed and expressed that he wanted me to be taken care of exactly the way they took care of Bettye Jean after losing Harry. We resolved to give the law firm a call...after all, what did we have to lose?

To receive a complimentary copy of *Losing Harry*, please contact Venus Nelson at (813) 286-1700; (941) 755-9400 or venus@thestrategiccounsel.net.