

## A Memorial Tribute to My Amazing Wife Giusi Johnson

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When I think about my late wife Giusi, I am in an endless state of awe and amazement. I had the privilege to witness the life of a very special person up close for 17 years. It's hard to believe that 23 years have gone by since her time of passing.



*Mark and Giusi*

I first met Giusi in December of 1980, in New York City. I was immediately struck by her unusually deep beauty and spirit. I began talking with her in English, but quickly realized she did not understand a word I was saying, as she smiled, shaking her head. Giusi was born and raised in Northern Italy and had only been in the States for a very short while. Hand language helped a lot at that point! I remember wondering, even though I was deeply moved by this first encounter, how could this ever work, moving forward.

I know you have all heard the saying "Love at First Sight," and for me it was like this with Giusi. I had never met anyone with whom I felt so comfortable and peaceful from the very beginning. I know that this may be unusual for some, but for me (and I believe for her also), this was how it was. I have to say I was in a blissful state of mind and, for the most part, it just got better over time. This is because of the kind of person Giusi was, and how she lived her life on a daily basis in relationship to others, and with God.

One of the greatest tests of character is how a person lives their life no matter what the situation. We can all make ourselves look good in public, at work or at church, but when we are out of the spotlight, how do we behave and live our lives? Giusi was always constant. She gave everything of herself in all that she did. She always went out of her way to make people feel comfortable, and never stopped giving of herself, night and day. In the beginning of our relationship I remember feeling a little jealous of how much she loved and sacrificed herself for others, but I later came to love her more for this unique quality. Friends were always calling Giusi on the phone or coming by the house to talk with her. She was the one others felt free to share their heart with. She was a very great listener and, when asked, gave good advice. If anyone came to our home, she would feed them good food (we wore out the Waffle maker) and everyone would leave feeling full and content. It certainly showed in my well-rounded body!



*Giusi with our son*

When at the office, Giusi always took on more than was asked of her, often helping others do their job. During the busy season of her work, when she was not able to get everything done before leaving for home, she would often go back to the office after our boys were in bed, staying there till after midnight. This is not easy to do, especially with three energetic young boys to take care of, but she never complained. Because of this, Giusi won the respect of employees both at the home office and in the other locations she interacted with. She was known as the one person you could go to get things done, the one to call if you needed to solve a problem, and this was always done with a joyful attitude. In 1997 she was selected as employee of the year out of over 400 employees nationwide.

Our home was most often filled with joy. Giusi was always singing (Italian songs) and laughing around the house. She had a great sense of humor and would even laugh at my worn-out jokes. I would often kid around about how clean and neat she was, and I

would get her to laugh so hard she would cry. During the weekends when I would go away for work, she would wait up or sleep on the couch until I arrived home, sometimes early in the morning. Her love and support were constant, no matter what.



*Giusi with our boys*

The one thing I remember most is how much Giusi loved our three boys. She was most happy when she was with them and cry tears when they were struggling or sick. She was always proud of their accomplishments and a cheering Mom at sports events and breakthroughs at school. Even when she was upset at them for what young children do, she would yell at them in Italian so they would not understand the words being used. They would laugh at her Italian words and gestures and most of the time she would just laugh with them. I also remember how clean and organized our

house was all the time. Coming from Italy, Giusi was trained to keep things very clean and orderly, and people who visited our home were amazed to see this, especially with 3 active children in the house. Giusi had a way of organizing things very quickly and efficiently on a very tight budget. I remember when we moved into our house in New York, in one day she had completely put away and organized our whole home. I just could not believe it when I came home from work that night.

Giusi was diagnosed with rapid growth breast cancer late in 1995. When we got the news of course it was quite upsetting, but she was determined not to let this get her down and we immediately made a plan to fight it. After limited results from a natural approach and surgeries to deal with the disease, she tried chemo as well as supplemental herbal treatments. During this process, she hardly ever complained and even decided to continue working and investing in taking care of others. She did not want to overburden her friends with all that she was going through. Throughout this whole ordeal I was always amazed at Giusi's unselfishness and her service to others, even during her last days before passing. Even during her last days, when she could no longer get out of bed and was in pain, when friends would come over to visit, her first question was are you hungry, would you like to eat? Or, how are your children and family? I witnessed this firsthand over and over. Giusi's greatest struggle came from knowing that she would not be there each day for her young boys, (they were 9, 10 and 12 at that time) and to give them the love and guidance they needed while growing up, and she shed many tears over this. She even told me that I was the best thing that ever happened to her; I know she was for me. Many tears were shed over this. She was also very upset knowing she would leave her only brother Franko and his family behind, whom she loved very much.

During the last few days of her life, a most serene and pure spirit filled our bedroom. Even though she was so frail, and her body was slipping away, I have to say I never saw her more beautiful and peaceful. The room was thick with the presence of God and love. Giusi passed away at home very peacefully on Oct. 5th, 1998, at 3am.



*Thank you Giusi*

Thank you Giusi for showing all of us what Love really is by the way you lived your life each and every day. I apologize that these words do not begin to say what a great person you were/are, what a wonderful wife you were to me, and mother you were to our children, and a great friend and sister to so many. Even though it's been 23 years since your passing, true love never dies, it only grows deeper, and our memories of you will always be forever fresh and alive.