

From Connie Crowther, thank you for sending this to us!!!

# Margie!

Margie and I have been friends for 32 years. Tim and I first met her just a few years after she had moved down to Miami from Kettering – through Tony, who taught with Tim at Southwest Miami High. Even then, just a couple of years out of college, she had the makings of a consummate, dedicated, loving teacher. But she was also beautiful, leggy, saucy. Really WORE a pair of jeans. That's Margie. Bags of fun, a great big laugh, a gorgeous smile. Sometimes, a really wild child. As the years ticked on, we stayed friends, salved one another's wounds, still had lots of fun. Traveled together a bit. Fort Myers Beach. Long beach walks. Sitting at a bar watching wild dolphins play in the water. We became closer again in the past few years, as she battled – and we all know that I DO mean battled – breast cancer, then acute, devastating leukemia.

Her pets were always at her side, lucky as they were. Tim and I always tease her that the animals she found at the side of the road, behind a dumpster or at the local pound had "won the lottery," having the good fortune of catching her eye. From Thor, Coco, Jenny and Peanut – and others – to Freckles, Pepper and Gracie, they are all lucky little creatures. They were her family.

As bad news compounded against bad news in recent years, our friendship tightened even more. She sought the solace and comfort of CGCC. Nearly every Sunday, we went to the small, informal 9 a.m. service – three of us. Our good friend Kay Fahringer joined us and we formed what everyone called "The Three Musketeers." She always drove and picked both of us up. Sometimes – especially when Kay was traveling – we would skip church and go walk on the beach on Key Biscayne. We called it "going to the Church of the Deep Blue Sea." She loved the church, Pastor Guillermo, and its people – and it's only fitting that we remember her here today, and celebrate her life and her legacy in this beautiful sanctuary.

After she got the devastating news last June that her life would likely be cut short, I told her, "Margie, I'm not going to be your friend who will sit around and cry with you. I'm going to be your friend who will take you to the beach, shopping, carousing, out to a nice restaurant, to a concert, on a picnic, out for some real adventures. Make a list and we'll work our way through it."

And so we did. We found a strip of Miami Beach at about 37<sup>th</sup> avenue that suited us perfectly, with a nice hotel, a beach bar and clean restrooms just steps away on the boardwalk. We had a special day out in the Redland – sticky buns for breakfast, strawberry milkshakes, an awesome bonsai farm and orchid nurseries, an old country store where we bought boiled peanuts, a

farmer's market, Robert is Here, a stroll through some antique shops, topped off with a fantastic chili relleno dinner and too much salsa at El Toro Taco. I literally could not keep up with her, she was so enthusiastic, and having so much fun. And that was just three months ago, when the leukemia was briefly in remission!

As a writer, I am the one she called on to write her life story, which has been used for several purposes – a feature in the church newsletter after she made a large donation to be used for scholarships for children of migrant workers, one of CGCC's major outreach groups. This story – fully reviewed and blessed by Margie – has been used as a narrative for the presentation ceremony at the church and as the basis of story about her which was featured on the national website of the Humane Society of the United States, to which she has also bequeathed a generous donation.

Here's a quote from Margie from the humane society website story: "I want so much to make a statement about the animals and people who are most important to me. I also wanted to provide support to programs that I know will truly help the needy and the suffering. Knowing I will leave a legacy like this makes me feel better at a time that is, of course, very difficult.

"So many animals and so many children lead lives tinged with unnecessary obstacles or unpleasantness," Margie said. "I smile inside thinking that my legacy can bring some happiness or relief to someone who desperately needs it."

Then, the story was used most recently, as her obituary. The obit was published in the Miami Herald July 13. This was enhanced by a pretty picture of Margie that I took March 11 as she celebrated her 58<sup>th</sup> birthday at The Outback with about 40 of her closest friends – many of you from Jack Gordon Elementary School, of which she was extremely proud.

Margie asked me to contact all her animal charities and learn what programs they had under way that she might contribute to. During my research and interviews, I sought ways to memorialize Margie Berry for generations to come through programs like: education programs in schools about being kind to animals and general pet care; a rural vet program benefiting animals in remote areas where no vet service is available; an isolation unit for seriously ill animals under care at the local humane society; wildlife protection; and marine animals in distress in our increasingly warming world. She wanted to make a meaningful contribution. Some of these programs and projects will even bear her name. She wanted to meet the people involved. And she wanted to make sure the money she had saved for her cut-short retirement would be used to its best advantage. As time goes on, you will read and learn more about what Margie's legacy will be among the animals – some of her dearest friends.

Speaking of friends, Margie has legions of friends. All of us were able to help her immensely during her last months – transporting her – in fact, friends provided a kind of personal STS transportation service for her; sitting with her when she came home from the hospital; looking after her pets; keeping her lawn cut and her property tidy; doing grocery shopping for her; managing her mail and bills; making her favorite foods and taking them to her; getting up in the middle of the night to go rescue her and call 911 to take her to the emergency room; caring for

her day and night as her life moved to an end; Just being friends. Tim and Brad and Jan, you have been very, very special friends to Margie and I call your names today because I want everyone to know how many hours you have spent with her, how much you have done.

I speak of Margie throughout in the present tense. I think we all know that Margie will be a sprite who will forever move among us, boosting us as well as chiding us. As we all face our own challenges, we have a perfect role model for bravery, hope and spirit. If we aspire to the spirit Margie showed during her last years of life, it will serve us well, too.

