

Her Name is Jama

Her name is Jama, but her middle name should be "Courage." Jama has been one of my best friends since about the fifth grade. Six and a half years ago, she was suddenly diagnosed with ovarian cancer (stage 3C). The invasive surgery was scheduled quickly. One minute Jama was one of the healthiest people I have ever known, and the next minute she was being wheeled to the operating room, with her close-knit family and her closest friends by her side. As I said goodbye, one of the nurses asked if Jama was my sister, and one of her actual sisters said, "Well, yes, in a way." The minutes became hours as we waited for the oncology surgeon to return to the waiting room. The news was not good as the cancer cells had spread. The disease had progressed so much without ever giving a warning.

Jama faced the next months with an uncommon grace that is, even now, hard to explain. She lost her hair and her strength, but she was always the first one to ask how others were doing. After the first round of chemo, Jama entered a clinical trial in Louisville, Kentucky because she selflessly thought it could help with the research to find a cure for this disease. Eventually, she had to drop out of the study because the cancer returned. The cancer has now returned four times after each round of chemotherapy and a short time of remission.

Her mother would always say, "Not my sweet Jama!" And, we all felt the same way. How could it be Jama to get hit so hard with this horrible disease? She always ate healthier than the rest of us put together.



Lisa Adler

We teased her because she would say that if you are hungry for chocolate, just eat a chocolate chip. One chocolate chip!!! We are not talking about one chocolate chip cookie here. Jama was a dietician by profession, and a very good one. She worked through the chemo treatments until it became impossible to keep up with the rigors of work. A doctor once said to her that she was a "crackerjack dietician." She called me to see if I thought that was a compliment or not. I had to look it up in the

dictionary, but sure enough, it means "of excellent quality or ability; fine." Jama struggled with giving up her job, but eventually she knew there really was not much of a choice, and she handled it with great aplomb. I am not sure if the hospital has ever before had more farewell parties for a beloved departing fellow healthcare worker.



Marti Starkey

I have been so blessed by my friendship with Jama. There has never been a time when we have not been close friends over the last 45 years or so. I can still remember in middle school riding our bicycles the few miles between our homes to see which of our mothers had baked our most favorite dessert. We both have had mothers who love to cook and are excellent at it. I can still see the joy in Jama's face when she ate a piece of my mom's strawberry pie. I remember, as little girls, dancing and singing in the basement of her home to the beat of Diana Ross's music, long before we knew there was such a thing as karaoke.

Jama has many, many friends because she knows how to be a good friend. Anytime I have really needed a friend, she has been there for me. We do not know what the future holds (for any of us), but Jama is facing it with strength, courage and a joyful spirit. We are all going to face times when we need courage. May we use Jama's example as a guide.

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35