



Jared Ewy and his mother, Ann Dunning

Comedian Carries On *Mom's Legacy*

by Liz Holzemer



"I can't stand euphemisms for death," says comedian, Jared Ewy, as he begins his routine in front of a packed smoke-free club. "People say, 'I'm sorry you lost your mom.' Well that kind of makes me sound like an idiot; like we got separated at Wal-Mart, I gave up the search and went home."

Jared, a 31-year-old Colorado native, isn't entirely joking—he did lose his mom, but not at Wal-Mart. Jared's mom, Ann Dunning, lost her battle with brain cancer last summer. She was only 54, but had fought the fight for over a decade. Ann continued to joke around up until her death, despite nineteen meningioma brain tumors, blindness and dealing with the ravages of chemotherapy and radiation.

"I remember last summer just after her ninth surgery; I was tiptoeing to her hospital room because I didn't want to wake her," Jared recounts with the same lively voice he greets listeners with as the entertainment reporter for 99.5 (KQMT), the Mountain. "She's already been at the hospital for twenty-five days, ten of which have been spent in ICU, mind you. As I turn the corner, here is my mother wearing two hand puppets, putting on a show for the doctors and nurses."



It is his mother's vivacious spirit that keeps Jared sane each day. "It sounds simple, but my mom lived from her heart," he said. "She never wanted to be defined by her brain tumors; she embraced life every day, whether she was shooting hoops with her five-year-old grandson, Tyler, or posing for a close up with an iguana in Mexico."

To say Jared and Ann were close is certainly an understatement. Jared expressed his outpouring of grief to cope with her impending death through journal entries.

OK, here's the deal. You love someone. You need that same someone. When that someone's track record of taking care of you, motivating you and raising you is one hundred percent perfect, you find yourself a bit attached to her. That's the case with my mother.

What defines Ann Dunning, mother of three is that she knows nothing of defeat. Complaining is useless... To mom, something infectious is laughter.

Up until the time she was diagnosed with the first of nineteen brain tumors, Ann spent her days shaping young minds. She taught low-income, high-risk children at North Park High School in Walden. "Bottom line, my mom loved kids," Jared said. "Young kids, big kids—she loved them all." The day before Ann died; Jared shared his mom's passion for kids in another one of his journal entries.

I have a feeling she's already slipped into a more comfortable place. I'm guessing a playground with kids everywhere and all the art supplies and graham crackers you could ever want.

"I watched a vibrant, beautiful soul die a slow death, but throughout the process, not once did I see my mom give up," Jared recently shared with me.

Like Ann, Jared is not one to sit back and wait for life to happen. Within days of her passing, Jared and his wife, Sarah, established

Meningioma Facts & Statistics:

- Meningiomas are a type of brain tumor that develop from the meninges, the membrane that surrounds the brain spinal cord.
- Meningiomas account for 30.1% of all primary brain tumors.
- Of those diagnosed, 65% are women.
- Although the majority are considered benign, meningiomas cause deficits and can be life threatening.

National Brain Tumor Action Week is May 1-7, 2006

Sources: Meningioma Mommas and Dr. Elizabeth Claus, Brain Science Foundation

the Ann Dunning Memorial Scholarship Fund. The fund helps graduating high school seniors who plan to attend college and become teachers. It will also aid non-traditional students going back to school with aspirations of becoming educators. To date, the fund has raised \$7,000 and will award two \$1,000 scholarships next month.



Jared and his wife, Sarah

Multi-talented like his mother, Jared is using his production skills to film, edit and distribute a short documentary for American Academy Charter School in Lone Tree. The film was shown during the school's fundraiser on April 29, which Jared emceed.

Jared believes it is his legacy to hone his mom-inherited-comedic talents and make people laugh while sharing Ann's story with everyone he meets. "My mom taught me that we are the funniest when faced with cataclysmic grief," he said. "So when the apocalypse dawns, look for me live at a local club." And to find out where Jared is headlining from Highlands Ranch to downtown Denver, check his website, www.ewysplayhouse.com, where you'll also find an entire page devoted to his inspiring mom.

Jared doesn't have any regrets, but does have a wish he thinks about daily.

"I wouldn't mind giving her one more hug just to tell her that she did everything right. And that she is my hero."

Jared, I have no doubt your mom is proud. ■

For more information about the Ann Dunning Memorial Scholarship Fund, please email Sandy Boatman at sandy@crnc.info or call (970) 224-3462.