

THE BIRCH TREE, PD (PARKINSON'S DISEASE), AND ME

This watercolor painting was done on the last day of my most recent series of painting lessons. I had intended to do a grouping of small birds, but their form kept eluding me and flying off my pallet before I could finish them. In quiet desperation I decided to paint this birch tree. It took shape easily, and was finished by the end of the class period. I gave it no particular thought when I got home, tore it off my pallet, and put it away in a file.

I didn't think of it again for days, but somehow the trunk and bare branches of that tree began to remind me of my life as a Parkinson's disease patient. The size of the trunk and branches was diminished as the tree aged, but still it seemed to grow upward toward the light as if lifting its arms in prayer. The branches are not all beautiful and smooth, and some of the smaller branches appear to be broken off or dying, but they do not detract from what appears to be light shining on the tree.

The trunk and branches remind me of my life as a PD patient. My lifestyle has had to be adjusted, but still I feel there is a valuable contribution I can make as a Parkinson's Patient. That contribution is what many have referred to as the Ultimate Gift – the gift of the PD patient's brain upon the death of the patient.

This must be planned for in advance and legal details worked out ahead of time with the doctor. But it is well worth the effort to know I have done what I can to find a cure for PD in my life and in my death. I urge you to ask your doctor what steps you can take NOW to assure the paperwork is in order. Let us combine our gifts and resources to find the ultimate cure for our common enemy – Parkinson's disease – and help future generations to be free of this dreaded disease.

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