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As her infectious laughter fills the room with cheer I almost forget why she wears her camouflage hat and walks with a cane. Her six months of chemotherapy and a broken hip have taken away most of her strength but her spirit remains stronger than ever. This doesn't surprise me because my Grandmother Rita Palumbo has faced so much tragedy yet always has a positive outlook towards life.

My "Nanny Rita" was born to an Italian immigrant family. After their first daughter was born with spastic paralysis, my great grandparents decided that if their next daughter would be born healthy she would be named after Saint Rita. When she was only seventeen, My Grandmother's father suddenly passed away. With both her older brothers serving in the army, an older ill sister needing to be looked after, and a newborn sister in the home, she had to support her entire family by working as a bank teller. When she was twenty four she met her husband, Carmine Palumbo at the bank where she worked. They went on to have four children, 3 boys and a girl. The girl is my Mother Catherine.

On January 10, 1972 the unimaginable happened, when a fire ravaged their home during the night. Everyone was in such a panic during the fire that no one realized that the youngest child, John and Aunt Marie were still in the burning house. Carmine went back into the house to rescue the remaining family members, but was overcome by the smoke

and flames. The deadly fire took away the lives of three beloved people in my nanny's life, her husband, her eight year old son John, and her older sister Marie.

Many people, given this tragic situation would've wished death upon themselves or fallen into a pit of depression. However, my nanny had faith in God and was able to slowly rebuild her life. Ever since the fire she has been inspiring everyone around her, she helps people look at life from a new perspective. Instead of looking at her life as tragic she looks at it as a blessing. This January she broke her hip and while she was in the hospital they found she had two types of cancer. For six months she had chemotherapy to treat the cancer which made her weak and feeble. And while all of this was going on she lost her younger sister, Joanne to Leukemia.

Life is all about playing out a bad hand well. This is how my Nanny chooses to lead her life and I feel she deserves to be recognized. Even now at nearly eighty years old she touches people that she meets with her attitude, style, kindness and generosity. People who know her are better because of it. I would like to nominate my Nanny into the Hall of Fame because her 80th birthday is on October 5th and it would be an honor for her to be recognized for being the hero that she is.