



In Loving Memory of Joan Cox Gill, MD

June 23, 1943 - May 9, 2018

It is with great sadness that I write to tell you that Dr. Joan Cox Gill, our friend and founding member of the Hemostasis and Thrombosis Research Society (HTRS), passed away in the early hours of May 9 after a hard-fought battle with cancer. She spent the last days of her life in peace and comfort, enjoying a string of gorgeous spring days and visits with a never-ending procession of colleagues, friends, and family.

Joan was a gifted mentor, a dedicated and compassionate clinician, a talented investigator, and above all, a devoted mother to her daughter, Gretchen Joan Gill (and to all of her “adopted” kids, myself included). A pioneering woman in her field, Joan graduated from medical school in 1976, a time when female physicians were few and far between (and especially ones with young children at home). She was passionate about serving the hemophilia community. She found joy in mentoring hundreds of fellows and junior investigators over the years and in watching their careers blossom.

Joan graduated Cum Laude from St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin in 1965. She completed her graduate training in Pharmacology at the University of Illinois, and quickly moved on to serving as a research technologist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Upon completing her studies at the Medical School of Wisconsin in 1976, while simultaneously serving as a single parent to Gretchen, she became an intern and resident in the Department of Pediatrics at what was then Milwaukee Children’s Hospital. By 1978, she was deeply committed to a fellowship in Pediatric Hematology and began a lifelong love affair with the science and clinical management of bleeding and clotting disorders.

A favorite with young patients and their families, Joan’s professional demeanor was soft-spoken and kind. At the same time, she presented an air of confidence and expertise that put worried parents and patients of all ages at ease, enabling them to trust that their well-being and quality of life were uppermost in her mind. She would always counsel patients that they “were not their disease,” but whole persons with much to contribute to their families, communities, and professions. When pressed, Joan’s tenacity, intelligence, and capable personality could become a force to be reckoned with, though she always tempered her interactions with staff, colleagues, and the perennial rabble of Gretchen’s friends with a big dose of good humor.

Joan loved doing research and relished her time in the lab. She was always thinking about the next grant, the next discovery, or the next collaboration. Her focus was never on building her own ego or career, but always on what was good for the patients and the advancement of knowledge in non-malignant blood disorders. Joan and her research team were the first to identify immune abnormalities in hemophilia patients that ultimately became recognized as AIDS, and she led the clinical work on the first grant funded by the National Institutes of Health on AIDS in hemophilia. Her work was equally important in the diagnosis and treatment of von Willebrand’s Disease. She published over 100 peer-

reviewed articles, editorials, and research abstracts, and was actively engaged in writing more at the time of her diagnosis in 2017.

Joan served as Treasurer of the HTRS Board of Directors for over 25 years. She wrote the Society's Articles of Incorporation and shepherded the process of achieving federally-recognized nonprofit status for HTRS in 1994. She was immensely pleased with the Society's growth, but was quick to credit her colleagues as the reason for the organization's success. In recognition of her many hours of volunteer service, HTRS created the *Dr. Joan Cox Gill Award for Outstanding Service to HTRS* in her honor; she was the first recipient of the award in 2013. This same award now recognizes the amazing contributions of other volunteers, like Joan, who devote so much of their time and energy to HTRS. Thanks to Joan and her fellow HTRS members, the Society is realizing its mission to build a robust workforce of skilled physician-scientists to ensure that patients with blood disorders can live their best lives now and in the future.

In 2013, Joan began, in her words, the "process of retiring," which seemed a lot to those of us who knew her as just another active phase in a long and successful career. At the time of her so-called retirement, Joan was Professor of Pediatrics and Medicine at the Medical College of Wisconsin, Investigator at the Blood Research Institute of BloodCenter of Wisconsin, Medical Director of the Hemophilia and Bleeding Disorders Center at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, and Director of the Comprehensive Center for Bleeding Disorders based at BloodCenter of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Joan's intellect was keen and her wit legendary. Her laugh was deep and infectious. In addition to her many professional achievements, she loved dogs and cats, spending time at her family's lake cottage in northern Wisconsin, playing Bridge and other card games, reading mystery novels, and completing very challenging crossword puzzles. (Sometimes I would get in a word or two when we worked a puzzle together, but she was always way out of my league.) She was a talented pianist and visual artist who could tackle any creative project – from sewing slipcovers, to painting with pastels, to once producing for me her famous "Waldorf Astoria" red velvet birthday cake from scratch, in an old bowl, and using an ancient cottage stove to bake it that the rest of us couldn't even figure out how to light.

She was a night owl by nature, and would often keep company with Gretchen and a gaggle of our friends deep into the wee hours of the morning. When Gretchen and I became fast friends in elementary school, she was in the thick of building her professional career. Of course, being 11 years old and completely insensitive to this fact, we kept her awake many nights with loud card games at sleepovers and general carousing during summer vacations at the cottage. After a few stern warnings that she REALLY needed her sleep, she would give up, put on her robe, heave a deep sigh, and simply say, "deal me in."

She was an adopted grandmother to my two daughters, Sarah and Amy, and a beloved member of our extended family. It wasn't a party until Joan brought her spinach dip in a bread bowl along with a stack of board games. Always up for fun, she would drive an hour from home to join us for our traditional Christmas Day celebration, which we spent dressed in our holiday pajamas. Ever the speedy driver, I

always worried she would be pulled over and have to convince the officer that she was really a noted hematologist, even though she was dressed in a nightgown and driving in slippers.

Joan was a force for good in the lives of so many people. She was a loving sister, serving as the family matriarch to her five siblings Carol, Robert (known as “Corky” to his family), Patty, Richard, Jim, and a host of nieces and nephews. She spoke often of her years growing up in the small town of Peshtigo, Wisconsin and the joy her family found in simple things and just being together. She maintained a close friendship with her ex-husband, Gordon Gill, and together they worked to raise a pretty amazing daughter in Gretchen. She will be sorely missed by all whose lives are richer for her intelligence, humor, love, dedication to medicine, and enthusiasm for the fine arts.

God speed, dear friend. As Gretchen said so beautifully on the day you passed, we are right behind you, and we look forward to seeing you again.

Lorilyn Jacobsen-Tews
Executive Director, Hemostasis and Thrombosis Research Society