Elizabeth Dudek is a feisty woman in her mid 60's. She learned of the Turner Syndrome Foundation in 2010 after a chance meeting. She was participating in a scientific research study at the National Institute of Health and was introduced to a participant of different study that had ties to the Foundation.

Elizabeth grew up in Illinois surrounded by a loving and faithful family. They took care of her when she was sick, even if her parents' lack of insurance did not enable them to take her to doctors on a regular basis. "Given the lack of medical care I received for chronic chest and recurrent ear infections and the underlying syndrome, it is remarkable that I am here today," she recalls. When she was 16, doctors encouraged her parents to take her to the hospital for testing, but it was until 3 years later in 1967 that she was finally diagnosed with Turner Syndrome.

Her family moved to Arizona after her Dad's retirement in 1971 a year or two after she graduated from high school. "I stayed close to my parents in Arizona. They were my shelter as I failed miserably through junior college," she reminisces. Perhaps it was reflective of her early days in elementary school. Elizabeth was bullied terribly because of her height and immaturity, and had poor grades because of her vision issues and learning difficulties. She was very quiet and introverted and didn't seem to have friends.

This difficult start, and strong empathy towards understanding and helping others, only fueled her strong desire to find success. "I loved to work and held an assortment of different jobs over the years. It took longer for me to earn my bachelor's degree, but I was fixated on holding a degree in Psychology." Elizabeth earned a B.A. in Psychology and became a counselor. Working for several years as counselor in a court appointed recovery program helped her to realize her impact through hope and compassion, utilizing her underlying faith and an encouragement system that she relied upon in her own life. She utilized her gift of empathy to listen and to help her clients to keep going.

She was in the NIH study three times in 2002, 2010, and 2012. Elizabeth describes why she wanted to join the study: "Going to college helped me get out of the feeling of isolation. When I learned about the research opportunity I wanted to help others through my case study at the NIH. They called me back for blood work as a follow up this past year. The DNA kit arrived at my door for blood samples, and I gave it heartily as I understand my cells may someday unlock answers for future generations to come."

Elizabeth didn’t know anyone else with the condition until middle to late adulthood. Today she has a small group of acquaintances, some whom have Turner Syndrome. Her health issues have worsened over the years and because of her scoliosis she has mobility issues. She also had a stroke in 2006 as a result of atrial fibrillation. Elizabeth survived once more after being declared brain dead and had to recuperate gradually in a nursing home before transitioning back to living independently in her own apartment. Elizabeth has lead a lifetime of service and adds, “I guess God didn’t want me. He wants me on this mission to help people’.

Elizabeth has had quite a life’s journey, filled with faith, hope, and service. One may consider a life of hardship incongruous to such an expressive and fully evolved woman, yet her experiences have seasoned a faithful and loving spirit. Elizabeth encourages others affected by Turner Syndrome to follow their dreams and believes that support from family is crucial.

The Turner Syndrome Foundation, a national organization, dedicated to raising awareness and advocating for 1 in 2000 females who have this complex condition, welcomes individuals and families affected by Turner Syndrome to share their experiences so that others can learn from them. To share your story, email: info@tsfusa.org call 1-800-594-4585.

TurnerSyndromeFoundation.org
800-594-4585