GayLynn Brummett

February 1, 1997 By Evan Forster

GayLynn Brummett, unlike Rosa Parks, is a name not many would remember. She never intended to fight discrimination or win an award from the ACLU. She was just a Nebraska woman whose dream was to be a good mom. After a series of foster children, GayLynn's dream finally came true. Noah, a three-month-old boy, arrived at her house. He would be the child she and her husband, Jay, would finally be able to adopt. Or so they were told, until the Department of Social Services found out she was HIV positive. Three years passed, and the Brummetts were informed Noah was being taken away.

That's when I met the Brummetts -- during the height of their battle to keep their son. They were a quiet, shy and frightened couple. Frightened even to speak with me, a reporter from *POZ*. (See "The Parent Trap," May 1996.) But GayLynn opened her home. She cooked for me because she was concerned I never had time for a home-cooked meal in that big city I came from. She wondered if I would help or hurt her case, and asked without asking if I would give her the chance to show me she was truly Noah's mom. That didn't take much convincing. For others I suppose it did.

Some say a mother and child's connection begins in the womb. If you tried to take a tiger cub away from its mother, you'd have to go in with a gun. The Department of Social Services, the governor and the attorney general's office didn't see Noah, called John T. in my piece, as GayLynn's son. Big mistake. They probably didn't think they'd have to pull out their entire arsenal to take him from her, either.

At first meeting, GayLynn wasn't the type I would've described as a tiger, but then I didn't threaten to take her son away. Had I, I would've seen a few claws. Like Rosa Parks on the day she would not give up her seat at the front of the bus, GayLynn refused to give up her child, even if she had to fight until her death. And she did. From my vantage point, I saw a courageous mom, a quiet hero in a part of the world where PWAs are meant to sit in the back of the bus and not make trouble.

I remember leaving the Brummetts' home: GayLynn stopped me on the porch and said, "We feel like we've made a friend." I was feeling pretty lucky that night, and have ever since, to be considered among the friends of a hero whose name neither I, nor those whose lives her story has touched, nor a little boy she called Noah, will ever forget.

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