

FOR ACCEPTANCE INTO HARVARD, OUR BLACK NEIGHBOR, DAVITA McDONALD, HAD TO HIGHLIGHT EVENTS IN HER LIFE - HER REMARKS RE. THE DOWNES FAMILY FOLLOWS

The Downses' house, a big, white stucco house with green trim and shutters, will remain fixed in my mind forever. The Downses have eight children. The majority of them have babysat for me at least one time during my lifetime and I have known them for as long as I can remember.

The Downses' house was always my "home away from home". When I was younger, I made a daily habit of visiting the Downses. I used to go over to their house to talk, play and eat. Mrs. Downes always greeted me with a warm smile and gave me crackers and peanut butter. Mr. Downes used to draw silly pictures and teach me silly songs to play on the ukelele. Whenever I used to play with my friends, we always made a point of visiting the Downses, too.

After my father died and my mother was working the 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. shift at the hospital, I used to spend some of those nights at the Downses' house. I loved spending the night in their big house because I was able to sleep in one of the big, soft beds in one of the many bedrooms of their house. In the morning, Mrs. Downes made poached eggs and toast. She always knew how to make my favorite foods.

My favorite days were those in which Mrs. Downes used to come over to my house to visit, tell stories, and bring my mother and me loaf of her freshly-baked bread. The delicious aroma filled our house and I loved to toast it and eat it with butter.

About three weeks ago, my mother told me that Mrs. Downes is very ill. She told me that Mrs. Downes has terminal lung cancer.

I was in shock. I have always thought of Mrs. Downes as a vivacious, active woman. Discovering that Mrs. Downes has terminal lung cancer evokes the same sense of disbelief that is felt when a young child discovers that there is no Santa Claus.

I have decided to remember the good things about Mrs. Downes. The peanut butter and crackers, the poached eggs and toast, the freshly-baked bread, her warm smile, and her brilliant personality will always remain etched in my memory. My affection for her will live on in my heart long after she has left