

which will stay with me until I see him again. My family and friends have all been a victim of this disease and I am sure there will be more until they find a cure. I hope that my efforts and hard work will someday prevent someone else from losing a mother, father, sister, brother, neighbor, friend and grandparents to this thing we call cancer. If you have never attended Relay For Life, come out to Hartnell Friday June 22nd around 10pm when the Luminaria bags are lit up and I guarantee you will be touched to the depths of your heart by all the lives that have been plagued by this deadly disease. Even if it's only for a little while, walk around the track, look at all the names and faces and remember we don't sleep that one night because cancer never does. It awes and saddens me every year that someone else I know from our community has their name on one of those bags. I remain prouder every year because I can be a part of this and it reminds me once again, why I Relay ...

- Peggy Borchard

It has been 4 years since I wrote my last article sharing the story of why I relay. My reasons for participating in the Relay have not changed but the list of those I relay for has grown longer. I realize that life isn't always fair and there is a lesson to be learned from all experiences but I have to be honest...I'm really tired of this lesson.

This will be my 8th year participating in the Relay for Life and no matter how many times I attend, it never gets any easier to say goodbye. Last May I lost one of my dearest friends, Marilyn. I had met her at Hartnell College where she taught the psychology class I was enrolled in. I was impressed with her infectious laugh and sense of humor; I was drawn to her immediately and eventually she became my mentor. Her guidance and encouragement got me through a lot of tough times in my life.

Always unselfish, she never told me she was diagnosed with lung cancer while I was away at college and went through treatment essentially alone. She finally revealed to me her battle and achievement of being in remission. She was always fearful the cancer would return...and it did after 7 years. Even in the face of death though, she was always smiling and laughing; she never wanted to dwell on the negative and was always looking forward to the future. I was there when she left this world and even though it was one of the hardest moments in my life, I was grateful that I could comfort her during her last hours on earth. What a precious gift. I will never forget her.

Several months later I received a cryptic phone message that a co-worker and friend had become very ill but no details were provided. I knew right away in my gut that it was cancer and tragically my fears were confirmed a few weeks later. My friend Cindy was an amazing woman with a fiercely upbeat attitude. Cancer was not going to stop her and she reminded everyone that she would be coming back to work soon. She died within 6 months of her diagnosis. At her funeral, the same theme kept repeating in everyone's speeches... "Cindy was always smiling, laughing and positive. Always thinking of others and helping out when needed. Never said a bad thing about anyone, took pride in her family and job, always striving for perfection." I only knew Cindy for a short time but it was long enough to appreciate just how wonderful she was and what type of person we should all strive to be.

I thought that life could not possibly throw any more curves at that point but I was wrong. The day before Cindy's funeral, I received a phone call from my sister that our dear friend Cathy was in the hospital. The phone call to her goddaughter and son did not result in good news. "The doctors gave her 3 months," I heard over the phone and my heart sank. She

had been diagnosed with breast cancer 6 years earlier and vowed to fight with every ounce of her being, staying positive no matter what...and she did.

I had the privilege of meeting Cathy Bonus in 2000 and we bonded immediately. She was a second mother to a lot of people. You could talk to her about everything, especially things you didn't want to tell your parents. Anyone who knew her became a better person because of her unconditional love and support.

I had already been participating in the Relay for Life and asked Cathy to join me at the track for the survivor lap one year. She eventually did. She was so motivated, she started volunteering for the American Cancer Society and last year participated as a member on the Survivorship committee. At one team captain's meeting this past year, she stood up and thanked me for bringing her to the meeting and inspiring her to volunteer. I was moved beyond words...I just stood there, my eyes filling with tears and I blew her a kiss.

Even in her last weeks of life she had a smile on her face and positive outlook...planning her next birthday party and shopping trips. I will miss her terribly and the void in my heart will never be filled but I realize how blessed I was to have this beautiful creature drift into my life. I can only hope that I will make her as proud of me as I was of her.

If that wasn't enough to deal with, I just found out last week that my Uncle has been diagnosed with Stage 4 throat cancer. He will be undergoing treatment and surgery almost immediately and be in recovery for approximately 1 year. I can't believe it. He never smoked or chewed, yet here he is dealing with this diagnosis. Like the ladies in my article, he is trying his best to keep a positive attitude and fight this disease with everything he's got.

Every time I think that I can't go on because it is just too hard or because I'm exhausted I simply think how my friends and family felt during a treatment or a doctor's visit and I realize that I'm not really that "tired." The least I can do is continue to raise money for research to find a cure; to raise awareness of this epidemic; to educate people on the importance of a healthy lifestyle and regular screenings; and participate in the Relay for Life. That is the best way for me to honor my friends and family. - **Michele Friedrich**

I started out as a team member. I work for Los Palos Medical and I thought this would be a great way to support our patients. Then I started looking at my family and realized my aunt had battle uterine cancer and my uncle prostate cancer.

After participating on a team for 3 years I decided to step up to the plate and become a team captain. My daughter had a friend that started his battle with cancer at age 17 and lost his battle at age 25. IT ISN'T FAIR!! Then reality hit cancer isn't FAIR. It knows no age, it doesn't discriminate. My daughter has a 26 year old friend currently battling stomach cancer, how does a 26 year old gets stomach cancer? I have lost a co-worker and friend to this disease and have friends currently battling. So ask me why I relay? Why wouldn't I? I am the team development chair for the Salinas Relay and I have met a lot of amazing people and have made a lot of friends. I want to make a difference, we NEED a cure for cancer. No one should have to loose their family members and friends to this disease. I Relay for all of YOU!!! - **Melissa Singleton**

My sister, Barbara, died of ovarian cancer in January 1983. She fought the disease for four years until she could fight no more. Fourteen years later I lost a daughter-in-law, Emily Mangin Rotharmel, to ovarian cancer in

January 1997. She lost the fight after many years of fighting. My mother, Bertha Raley, is my most recent family member to die of cancer. My mom tried every treatment and new drug that was on the market, but in the end there was nothing left to do. Mom died last year, February 2006, four months short of celebrating her 60th wedding anniversary.

I look back on each of these spirited women and am inspired by the courage displayed during her individual fight against this opponent. I support and participate in the Relay for Life in hopes to find a cure for this deadly disease. So on June 22-23 you will find me back on that track supporting the cause. You can join me in the fight too by making a monetary pledge, in any amount. - **Linda Rotharmel**

I am a 7 year breast cancer survivor. My Mom is a 15 year leukemia survivor and my Dad is a 4 year prostate cancer survivor. I was asked by a friend in 2000 when I was going through treatment if I wanted to get involved in Relay For Life. I have been involved every since that time. I was and still am a member of Team Monterey County and try helping them in any way I can. I now also volunteer my time at the American Cancer Society office in Salinas and am the chairperson for the Cancer Prevention Study 3 (CPS-3) this year at our Relay. - **Jackie Gash**

I chose to volunteer in my mother's memory; she died due to the effects of cancer. I also volunteered for my sister who successfully battled cancer and has been in remission for more than 5 years. My friends and coworkers have all been touched by the loss of a loved one to cancer, or have endured difficult extended battles back to health from a cancer diagnosis. I feel extremely fortunate to be healthy and so I wanted to help raise money for the fight against cancer. - **Jeanne Thompson**

My brother, Bob, died of melanoma cancer in his sinuses on July 1, 2004. He was the person I always looked up to since he was my big brother. My father-in-law, Burt Arthur, died of throat cancer and my mother-in-law, Arlene Arthur, died of colon cancer. My wife was very close to her mother and it was very hard on her when her mother died. There was almost 12 years between my brother and myself. We were never very close but I respected him very much. Before my brother died, he was able to see his son marry at the end of May. He tried many different treatments and was then told that there was no cure for his type of cancer. So on June 22-23, I will celebrate my brother, and my in-laws life. - **Leland Irvine**

I Relay to honor the effort my wife went through when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Her struggles with emotional issues equaled those of a physical nature and her resolve to fight back and not allow this to take over her life gave me the strength to work right along side her in this battle. She has been free of this for well over 5 years now and in that time provided many others with mentoring to help them make it through this as well. She is truly a hero to me. I also Relay in memory of those who lost that battle and whose spirit is with us at all times. In looking at pictures of past Relays I see the names of people on luminaries who at the time were with us but have since passed on and I realize we must keep up the fight. - **Richard Lange**

The reason why I participate in Relay for Life is to celebrate my mother's memory. My mom died of melanoma in 1985 and she was only 43 years old. Not a day goes by that I don't miss her, she was also my best friend. She passed away a month after I got married. She never saw her grandchildren. I relay and help raise money for the American Cancer Society because it is the right thing to do, just like my mom raised me. - **Cindy Rosario Brown**

The Relay to me is a celebra-

tion of life in honor of so many survivors - many of whom are my friends and family. Also the Relay honors the memory of so many who have lost the battle. There are thousands of luminaries lining the Hartnell track every year. Just the sight of them aglow after dark always brings tears. We are just one of hundreds of Relays around the country with the same goal...to raise money for research to find A CURE! Maybe not in my lifetime, but some day, Cancer will be a thing of the past. I'd like to think I helped a little to reach that goal. - **Audrey Kliikovac**

I participate in Relay for Life because it is a great event with a lot of positive energy that provides help to others throughout the year. I also have had throughout my life witnessed some great people dieing of cancer. I also Relay because my father Lee Shields died in April 1978 of Leukemia at the very young age of 54. He died one month before I graduated from college and three months before I got married. I was his youngest child but he never had a chance to be a Grandfather. He and I did not have the opportunity to really know each other as adults. He died when I was 22 years old, while I was away at college having left home at 18. The disease took him in only ten months. I miss my father and it makes me sad that my two daughters never got to meet him. He was a great man, provider, father and role model to his children. - **Denise Shields, Team Monterey County**

I have recurrent Ovarian Cancer. I did not know it until my cancer had metastasized. Had I known the symptoms, I might have caught it sooner when it is more treatable. I Relay for Life so that other women can be aware of those symptoms through information provided by the American Cancer Society publications and press releases. I Relay for Life so that a reliable diagnostic test can be developed for Ovarian Cancer. Today, there is no such test. Many women think that their annual Pap Smear test screens for Ovarian Cancer. It does not. I Relay for Life so that the American Cancer Society can help support groups, like the Ovarian Cancer Support Group I attend, that help individuals like me live with cancer. - **Sue Carlson, Pacific Valley Bank Team**

I started to relay years ago so I would not forget my sister, Ida Marie, and our mom, Maria Orozco. Ida actually started me relaying and expressed the importance of finding a cure for cancer. Sadly, we lost our mom in 1969 to ovarian cancer and Ida in 2002 to colon cancer. I also relay to help others who are trying to survive from cancer. I really enjoy seeing the survivors of cancer. It gives me hope that there is, sometimes, a cure for cancer and hope for others who are struggling with it. Every family in one form or another has been touched by cancer. Whenever you meet the people at the relay it makes you realize that in our small corner of the world many people have been affected by it, that they share a common pain and suffering. It brings all of these people together who share the same pain of losing a loved one. We relate to each other in many ways. It maybe a "Relay for Life" but it is also a "Relate to Life" and the experience of cancer. - **Corrine Diaz**

I began participating with the Relay for Life the same year my dear mother, Mariana Rodriguez, was diagnosed with cancer. She participated that same year as a survivor and I as a supporter. We were both over whelmed with the kindness shown to us during the entire event and especially during the survivors' lap. I broke my heart to see many children who were suffering from cancer, hearing their stories from their parents about

their struggle to survive, and the many people present whose lives have been struck by cancer.

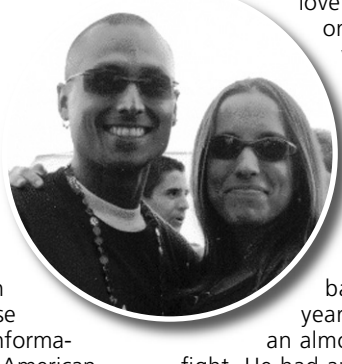
It is up to us as a community to help each other find a cure as it continues to touch us, continues to take our families and friends. I relay, as a reminder to support those who are still struggling with cancer and those who have lost loved ones. I relay for my dear mother. Let's Relay for Lives! - **Mary Orozco**

Why do I relay? I have a better question, why not? Everyone has been touched by cancer either directly or indirectly. It is a horrible thing to watch someone battle. It would be an amazing thing if we could make that stop for everyone. My friend Eric Ruiz and I have started our own team this year, Team Victor, in memory of his brother and my friend Victor Zamudio. He lost his battle three years ago at the age of 25 to testicular cancer. He was an amazing man whose smile could light up a room. I can still close my eyes and see that heartwarming smile. We want to keep that memory alive and strong. We want to honor him for being the fighter that he was. I met him while he was fighting his fight. I always found myself wanting to hold on to every moment with him knowing our time was ultimately limited. I wanted to be there for him as much as possible and give him one moment to smile and not have to think about what he had to face everyday. It has been three years since he's been gone but there isn't a day that goes by that we don't all think about him and miss him. My most recent reason is for Mr. Ron Ramirez. We are lucky to find real love in our lives once, and he was mine. My heart has never been broken but on April 10, 2007 it was crushed. He lost his battle at 27 years old after an almost three year fight. He had an aggressive stomach cancer that metastasized into his back and in the end, into his chest. He was always healthy, playing semi pro football just a year before he was diagnosed. It was an extremely rough road for him. Even through the frustration of having no control over his outcome and seeing his own body fight against him he always managed to stay positive. The fearfulness of the unknown did find him, however; he always kept his sense of humor and kept his spirits up. We knew his end was near and thought we could prepare for that, and he felt he could prepare us. I've now learned we were foolish to even think anyone could prepare for something like that. Watching someone you love deteriorate in front of you and not being able to do anything about it is why I want to see this disease cured. Now, it's his heart, his strength, his drive and his endless love that I will cherish in my heart forever. I wish I could have him here with me and breath him in, but I can't. So we now remember and admire him for his courage and keep his memory alive too. I do not know how it feels to be told, "you have cancer" but I do know how it feels to lose someone you love to it. I pray for the day no one has to hear the words, "I'm sorry we've done all we can do." I wait for the day we can eliminate the fear hearing the word cancer brings and rejoice in the words, "we have a cure." - **Monica Bandalan**

Actually I shouldn't be here telling you my story. My family doesn't have cancer; we have heart attacks and strokes. Not only that, but for years I followed a high fiber diet rich in fruit, vegetables, whole grains, non-fat dairy, fish, and chicken. I exercise. I don't smoke; I drink wine occasionally, and live in an area that has clean air. So why did I get cancer? Good question, the reality is one in every three people will eventually get cancer.

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My husband, Bob, found a paragraph in Bill Bryson's book A Short History of Nearly Everything which explains, "Cells can die violently - for instance, when infected. But mostly they die because they are told to. Indeed, if not told to live - if not given some kind of active instruction from another cell, cells will automatically kill themselves. Cells need a lot of assurance. When, as occasionally happens, a cell fails to expire in the prescribed manner, but rather begins to divide and proliferate wildly, we call the result cancer. Cancer cells are really just confused cells. On average, humans suffer one fatal malignancy for each 100 million billion-cell divisions. Cancer is bad luck in every possible sense of the term." It all started when I had a little spotting. Since I had not experienced anything like this in 25 years I immediately called my Doctor. He didn't hesitate but made an appointment for me with Dr. Shelly Goodwein. He examined me and sent me for more tests and reassured me that Dr Lilja, a experienced gynecological oncologist would come down from San Jose for the surgery. Bob asked if I wanted to go to Stanford. I said, "No, most of the people who know and love me are in Salinas." So that's how I found myself in the Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital having a hysterectomy. It was a good decision since I had wonderful care in a supportive and compassionate atmosphere. Following surgery I was told that everything had been removed and they were please that it was Stage 1 and had not spread. They were however concerned about the type of cancer I had because it was a carcinosarcoma, not a normal uterine tumor. Only about 1 in 50 women with cancer of the uterus have this type of cancer. Carcinosarcomas cause the same symptoms and spread in much the same way as the far commoner endometrial cancer. Carcinosarcomas are however often more aggressive or faster growing than endometrial cancers. Even though it was removed stage 1 it was not an assurance that it was not also somewhere else. Dr Lilja presented my case to the tumor board and the recommendation was that I should have radiation and chemotherapy. The choice was still mine. Did I want to go through all this after care knowing they had removed the cancer at Stage 1? My answer was a resounding yes; I wanted every chance I could have to live cancer free. I have gone through the radiation and I have been through chemo. I have found that all my friends who have had cancer have rallied around and shared their experiences. This is why I relay. Their caring and openness have been a great help. My family and especially my husband have acted as buffers and advocates by going to and scheduling appointments. To quote Suz Kling in an article she wrote "Surviving cancer is like learning a new dance—it looks easier than it is and courage means being afraid and doing it anyway." Cancer happens not only in your cells but also in your life. Never again when I fill out papers in a doctors office will I be able to zip through the questions placing a check in all the no boxes, cancer has become part of my biography. We need to get over the inability to speak of cancer. Let's talk about cancer and create interest and curiosity that will dispel myths and expand dialogue that will not only aid in a cure but also make cancer obsolete. This is why I relay. We need early detection and prevention so take care of yourselves; eat good foods, exercise, don't smoke, and please go and get your tests. After all, the best cure for cancer is early detection. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, "It's better to light a candle than curse the darkness." Let's light lots of luminaries. This is why I relay. - **Sue Antle, Salinas Relay For Life Torchbearer 2006.**



A DECADE OF HOPE ...