

Survival and Hope Life After Cancer



About Me:

CITY: Victorville

JOB TITLE: Retired

FAMILY: Two children, six grandchildren

HOBBIES: Likes to read; volunteers for church; volunteers with San Bernardino County Governing Board for public health centers.

PHILOSOPHY: Don't ever give up hope. Keep fighting, one of these days there will be a cure.

“Don't give up your faith, keep fighting”



The American Cancer Society provides a 24 hour service to answer questions about diagnosis, insurance, local support and resources

If you or someone you know would like to be featured in this series, please contact Liz McGiffin at liz.mcgiffin@cancer.org.

www.cancer.org or call 800-227-2345

Terry R., 64 Type of Cancer: Ovarian

By Alberta Hale Crigler

“You have to fight it; there will be a cure. Maybe not today or tomorrow, but look on the bright side, it may happen.”

Terry R. has held that belief for nearly 40 years.

“In 1980, I was three months pregnant,” she said.

“My doctor was concerned about a little black spot on my uterus. He said we could biopsy it and not harm the baby.

“We did that, and it came back cancerous. I was told I could either terminate the pregnancy or have the baby and take the risk.

“I had the baby.”

At the time, doctors said the best thing Terry could do was “to take everything.”

“I talked to my husband at the time,” she said, “and he said, ‘If it's the best thing, just do it. Of course, it is up to you.’

“They said it was a tossup: If we take it out now, we may get it all or it may end up some place else.

Terry said she knew others treated with chemotherapy and radiation, and how hard it was on them and their families.

“You put your family through all the hardships,” she said. “I know how much pain they are in. I am blessed my family didn't have to go through that.

“My son and ex-husband gave me so much support. His relatives were there. They kept encouraging me to fight, not give up.

“They said, ‘You have such a wonderful little person here, you need to fight.’ They would never let me give up.”

Terry did not have chemotherapy or radiation, and her cancer has not recurred.

“I was watched carefully every year in case it might come back,” she said. “They gave me a thumbs up on that; I was blessed.”

“I was one of the lucky ones. I did pray, I did go back to church, and I think God helped me with this. I think he is still helping me.

Eight years ago, Terry had another cancer scare. She had a 7-millimeter nodule in her breast.

“They biopsied it and said it was benign, but they wanted to watch it because it is a way that cancer starts.

“I had to have it checked every six months. They said it was so small, they would just watch it. Now it is dissolving on its own.

“So, they just wanted to watch it. I have had ultrasounds every six months for eight years, and in March they said I am fine.

“I encourage people - if they even think they might have any cancer or signs of cancer - get it checked. If they catch it faster, it might not spread.”

Resources for cancer patients were limited in the 1980s. “Back then they didn't have any support groups,” Terry said.

“I finally hooked up with Liz (McGiffin, of the American Cancer Society) four years ago when I wandered up to one of their booths at a fair.

“She told me about all the support they have. I said, ‘Wow, I wish they had that back then.’

“Ever since then, I have been there as much as I can. Whatever help I can give, I give them.

“To someone recently diagnosed, I say don't give up, continue fighting.

“Keep the faith and have your family there. Listen to them. They are not going to let you down. Find all the support you can.

“I have been on Circle of Friends, Melinda Marcus' Relay for Life team, and she recently started a support group.

“I am in that group now. We have meetings every month. We would like to see more people come.

“Don't give up your faith, keep fighting. One day when you are not in so much pain, you will be glad you were talked into not giving up.

“You have to say it in a loving way - we are caring for them.

Building support:

Cancer survivor Melinda Marcus started a new cancer support group about four months ago.

“I decided to start one for anyone - men, women, caregivers, anyone who wants to join in.

“The group is called Circle of Friends on La Paz. It is held at the United Methodist Church in Victorville.

“I urge people not to ignore a symptom if they think something could be wrong.

“A lot of people put it off and by the time they go to a doctor it is really bad.

“If they hear my story, it helps them say, ‘Hey, look how many years she has done it,’ and it gives them hope. They can do the same thing I did.”

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