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Story: Informing women was victim's primary goal

Continued from Page 1

and gasped for breath. Underneath the ache was a very hard oval-shaped area.

Three days later she had surgery to remove the growth.

The tumor had been almost three inches long. Forty lymph glands had been removed and 18 were malignant. If there had been four or less involved, the cancer would have been considered to be arrested and there would have been no need for further treatment.

In all honesty, I remember very little about the time when my mom was undergoing treatment, but I do remember her suddenly having surgery. One of my few memories of my mother comes from when I used to play in her room while she was getting dressed. I used to play with her prosthetic breast.

After she began her chemotherapy treatments, I remember her being tired a lot of the time. I knew that it was because of her medicine, but did not understand what she was going through. The chemotherapy made her lose her hair. After a while, she simply shaved the rest off and wore a wig.

She shaved her remaining hair one night after I had gone to bed. The next morning she woke me so I could get ready for school. In my half-asleep dazed state, I screamed, thinking she was an alien. Of course, a few seconds later I realized it was my mom. This became one of our private jokes.

These days it is hard for me to think about the past and the suffering my mom must have gone through. I never thought about it before, but in all that she was going through I never once saw her cry. When I found her article, I discovered the reason.

Everything I had read said it's not good to keep emotions bottled up inside. You should let them out. The next day I sat in my room and decided I would cry all the frustrations away.

I sat on the side of my bed and thought sad thoughts until large tears rolled down both

cheeks. Then it was like a dam had burst and the flood was uncontrollable. I couldn't stop. All day I walked around the house and cried.

When it was almost time for my children to come home from school, I realized I had to get control. Somehow I managed to get myself together and camouflage my eyes with drops and make up.

When she was diagnosed, doctors gave Mom a year to live — she lived for two-and-a-half years and finally lost her battle in September of 1983. At the time I never really understood what was going on; I couldn't accept the idea that I was never to see my mother again. I remember being at the memorial service and looking around at the different faces of my mom's friends and family. I didn't cry.

Two years ago I began to volunteer with the American Cancer Society's annual fund-raising event, the Relay For Life. The event celebrates the lives of those who died from cancer and celebrates the lives of those who are survivors of the disease. Teams of 10 to 12 people take turns walking or running around a track for a 24-hour relay. Before the event, members get donations, and two years ago, participants raised \$25,000. Last year, fund raisers doubled that amount to \$50,000.

Cancer research and education is very important. A misdiagnosis from a doctor cost my mother her life. She didn't know the proper channels. However, she tried to spread the word and discover a way to cope.

My husband's solution was to punch the gynecologist in the nose. My solution was to write an article to share this information with as many women as possible — always faithfully do a monthly breast examination and, if you find a lump, the doctor to see is a surgeon. Please pass the word.

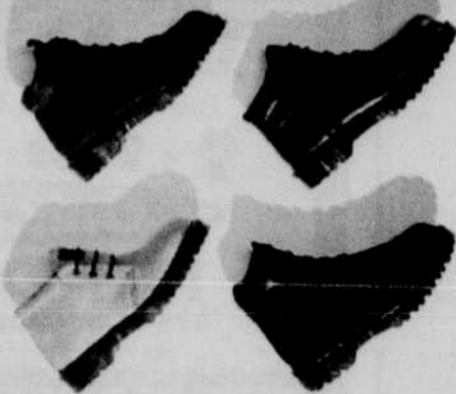
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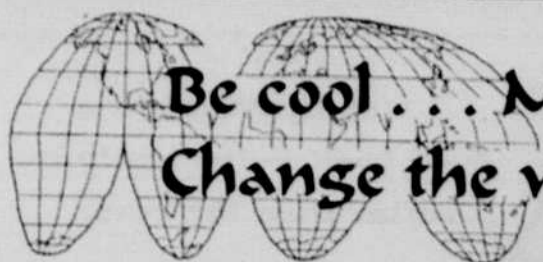
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