

Cancer

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room was full of family and friends to keep us company as our dad went through a seven-hour surgery. I remember the surgeon coming out to tell my family that the surgery had went better than expected, and they were actually able to

ence forever. So after returning to San Diego, CA, a decision was made quickly. Yep, I packed my things along with my sister Marsha, and by October 12, we were headed back to the Pacific Northwest. My dad did pretty well

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remove more liver lesions than expected. The whole room let out a HUGE gasp of air and burst into tears of relief, but we knew this was a fight that had just begun and we were ready to take on whatever came our way. A few days later, Daddy came home to recover from surgery and my sister and I prepared to fly back home to San Diego. When I hugged my daddy goodbye, it was hard for me to let go and the “ugly” cry began. I didn’t want to leave, I didn’t want to say goodbye; I wanted to stay in his pres-

while going through chemo; he was still going to work on his off-chemo weeks, still doing yard work, still cooking and cleaning, and he never lost a strand of hair! About eight months later, we all noticed that Daddy’s voice began to change and he was having trouble breathing. He went to see his oncologist to discuss this issue and came home on oxygen. I think at that point we all got a little nervous about our dad’s condition, but no one uttered a word. About a month later, our

dad was admitted to the hospital for what they thought was a pulmonary embolism (blood clot). About a week later, he was still having difficulty breathing and he was admitted into the hospital once again. After multiple tests and scans, the doctors came into the room to let us know that the cancer had spread to his lungs, he would not recover and we should call our friends and family. Within the hour the hospital room was full of friends and family, so many people who loved my dad came to pay their respects. The hospital had to move us to a bigger room to accommodate the mass of people coming to visit him. While my dad was in the hospital, my mom, sisters and I would trade off nights staying with him; this particular night was my turn to go home and rest. That night I remember sitting in my parent’s living room in disbelief that my dad was dying, and that this was my family’s reality. I remember feeling so angry that we didn’t know that there was a test and screening that could have prevented this very moment. I remember shout-



Marsha and Michell Baker are longtime vegan caterers pictured here in their former vegan soul food cart called ‘The Hope Kitchen.’

ing out to my sister, “This isn’t fair, how come more people aren’t talking about this?!” It was hard to grasp the idea that my dad would no longer be around for holidays, birthdays, my wedding day and the hardest one of them all – my children would never know their grandfather. I was hurt, sad, and VERY angry! At that very moment I knew we had to be a voice for our dad who would no longer be here to speak for himself. After a 10-month fight, my dad, Steve Baker, passed away from colon cancer on June 10, 2008 at the young age of 56. After laying our father to rest, the days and weeks that followed seemed unbearable; I couldn’t stop crying and feeling absolutely lost. I didn’t know how to move on, live life and be happy. The sadness had set in and you could see it in my eyes. I didn’t want to be around anyone who didn’t understand what I was feeling, so darkness and wine soon became my best friends. Although sadness was the overall emotion, as time went on I began to feel extremely ANGRY! I didn’t understand why we didn’t know more about preventing colorectal cancer. If this cancer is preventable, why aren’t people shouting this from the rooftops?

Read the rest of Michell Baker’s story online at www.theskanner.com



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