

What Cancer Means to Me

Cancer Stories and Tributes from Under the Dome

Benefiting the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

2011 Issue





The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) is the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society and supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer with the training and tools they need to make their voices heard. For more information, visit acscan.org.

The Texas Capitol Building

Cover photo: Completed in 1888 as the winning design from a national competition, the Capitol's style is Renaissance Revival, based on the architecture of 15th-century Italy and characterized by classical orders, round arches, and symmetrical composition.

Cover photo courtesy of Meredith Maples

Special thanks to Pfizer
for underwriting this publication.

We thank Pfizer for their financial support to underwrite this publication. Pfizer's Oncology Unit is committed to the discovery, investigation, and development of innovative treatment options to improve the outlook for cancer patients worldwide. By working collaboratively with academic institutions, individual researchers, governments, patient advocacy organizations, and other stakeholders, Pfizer Oncology strives to cure or control cancer with breakthrough medicines, and to facilitate access by patients to quality cancer care. For more information please visit Pfizer.com.



Cancer Stories and Tributes from Under the Dome

We are often reminded that cancer strikes everyone in some way. Certainly lawmakers and their staff members, friends, and family have not been spared the heartache and suffering that comes with the disease.

Over time, the wheels of legislation have steadily rolled to reduce the burden of cancer, largely fueled by lawmakers with a personal experience and a passion to defeat the disease.

The staff and volunteers of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) work hand in hand with those lawmakers to promote passage of bills that have made a real difference in the battle against cancer.

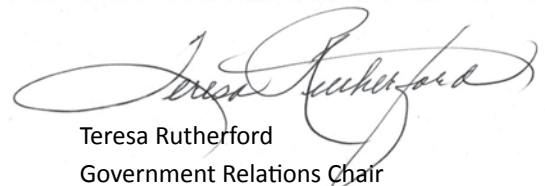
From laws that fund cancer research to those that enhance the prevention and treatment of cancer, legislation can be directly tied to the drop in cancer deaths in recent years.

We wanted to demonstrate the real motivation behind those laws and tell the stories of those who walk the halls of the Texas Capitol.

In these pages, you'll see the true spirit of cancer-related legislation and why we do this.



Mike Dany
Chief Executive Officer
American Cancer Society
High Plains Division



Teresa Rutherford
Government Relations Chair
American Cancer Society
Texas



Texas Capitol Rotunda Floor

On the floor of the rotunda are seals of the six nations whose flags have flown over Texas. The seals of the United States, Mexico, France, Spain, and the Confederacy surround the emblem of the Republic of Texas. This terrazzo was installed in 1936 to replace the rotunda's original flooring which featured a central octagonal design of glass blocks surrounded by geometric patterns of encaustic clay tiles. On the walls of the rotunda are portraits of the past Presidents of the Republic and Governors of the State of Texas.



Teresa Rutherford



Mike Dany

**Thanks to these legislators who signed a
letter to colleagues asking for submissions:**

Rep. Edmund Kuempel

Sen. Eddie Lucio, Jr.

Sen. Jane Nelson

Rep. Senfronia Thompson

Sen. Kirk Watson



**Sam Houston, First President
of the Republic of Texas**

This statue of a young Sam Houston (March 2, 1793– July 26, 1863) can be viewed from the south entrance to the Capitol building. Houston served as the first and third president of the Republic of Texas, senator for Texas after it joined the United States, and finally as governor. He is the only man to have served as governor of two states, Texas and Tennessee.

**Thanks to these sponsors of
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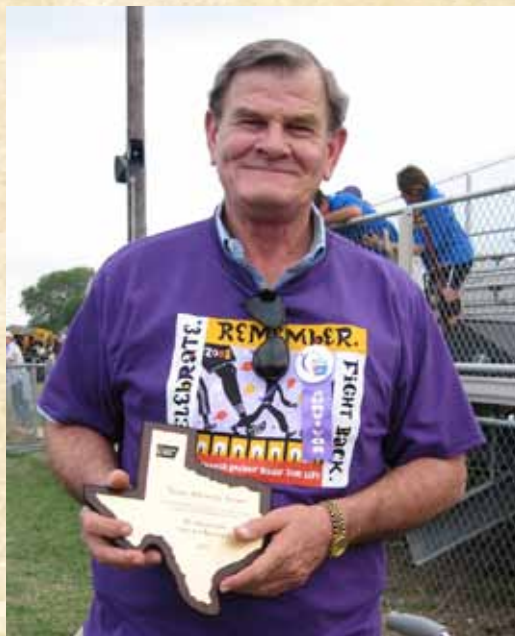
In Memory of Rep. Edmund Kuempel

Representative Edmund Kuempel passed away Thursday, November 4, 2010, after suffering a heart attack on the way to his Capitol office in Austin. He represented District 44, which encompasses Wilson, Gonzales, and Guadalupe Counties. Kuempel was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1983 and had won another two year term two days before his death.

As a cancer survivor, he understood the devastation that cancer causes and shared our desire to help others through policy. He participated in many American Cancer Society events. Over the years, Rep. Kuempel was a champion when it came to supporting policy to help everyone who faced cancer. He supported legislation such as the creation of the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT), oral chemotherapy and clinical trials legislation, and helped to secure funding for the Texas Cancer Registry.

Barbara Behal, an American Cancer Society volunteer and friend of Rep. Kuempel, reflected on an impressionable moment during the 2009 legislative session.

"I was sitting in the gallery and Edmund looked up and waved at me. Later I heard a noise behind me, but paid no attention to it. I was sitting on the steps and felt a hand on my shoulder along with 'Excuse me ma'am.' Of course it was Edmund and he planted a big kiss on me. He impressed a lot of people that day with that kiss, but for Edmund, it was his trademark."



Rep. Kuempel received an award at a 2008 American Cancer Society Relay For Life event

He was also a regular at his local American Cancer Society Relay For Life in Seguin, Texas. "We never had to put him on the program. He created his own place," said Barbara. He was also the guest speaker at the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) Fight Back Express event in 2008.

Rep. Kuempel not only made significant strides in the fight against cancer, but he also left an impression on the hearts of cancer advocates. He will be greatly missed.

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network Advocates

Rep. Dwayne Bohac and Rep. Beverly Woolley

In memory of Diane Jackson

Education advocate Diane Jackson, who worked for Spring Branch ISD for 30 years and was a tireless champion for Texas children, lost her life to cancer June 28, 2010.



Diane Jackson

As Diane valiantly fought the triple negative breast cancer that took her life, she was poised and selfless. During her final weeks, she inspired us by focusing on what she loved: the people and pets who love her, public education, and cancer research. She planned scholarships to help others pursue her love of education, arranged to donate her body to science to uncover the mysteries of triple negative breast cancer, and gave those she loved comfort and support.



We hope others view their lives and public education with the altruism and dedication that embodied our friend, Diane Jackson.



Rep. Bill Callegari

In memory of Jerome Callegari and Mary Callegari Cleland

I have five brothers and a sister, and our family is very close. When my father died of pancreatic cancer in 1968, it was a devastating blow to all of us. We had already lost my older brother the year before in an airplane crash during military training—and then my father's death multiplied the grief.

My father was a quiet man. He was a respected accountant and education was very important to him. Despite limited finances, we all graduated from college.

My only sister, Mary, worked as a nurse anesthetist and died just five years ago of lung cancer. We thought that since she had never smoked that secondhand smoke may have played a role in her death.

You better believe I was panicked when my daughter called to tell us that she had breast cancer. I insisted that she fly to Houston right away and get a second opinion. M. D. Anderson determined that the lump in her breast was

benign, but she had a lumpectomy for peace of mind. After losing my father and sister, we just didn't want to take any chances.

Then just a few days ago, my brother received a preliminary diagnosis of kidney cancer. Once again, I insisted on a flight to Houston for a second opinion. The growths on his kidney were determined to be benign.

If there's any one emotion attached to cancer, it's fear, and our family has surely suffered loss and the fear that comes after. In a way, the deaths of my father and sister have caused the rest of us to be more vigilant. We've suffered so much loss to cancer and want to do everything we can to prevent it.



Callegari family, oldest to youngest: Rep. Bill Callegari, Mary Cleland, Steve, Mike, Ralph, and Dick.



Sen. Rodney Ellis

In memory of Oliver Teresa Pettis Ellis
and William Ellis Pettis

I lost both my mother and my uncle to cancer.

My mother, Oliver Teresa Pettis Ellis, passed away of colon cancer at the age of 73. She was a private duty nurse who was keenly aware of the importance of preventative care. Although she had regular checkups, by the time she received her first colonoscopy, the doctor could visually diagnose her cancer because the extent was so severe. The cancer had already spread to her liver and lymph nodes.

After her diagnosis, my mother tried to continue living the full life she always had. Known for her sense of style, she planned a trip to Italy to get a pair of her favorite designer shoes, Salvatore Ferragamo. Her failing health did not allow her to go.

My mother was also known for her quick wit, sense of humor, and common sense. A month before she passed, my sister, Melody, printed a collection of her most notable quotes, which my mother autographed for close friends and family.

My uncle, William Ellis Pettis, passed away at the age of 66 from lung cancer. Uncle Billy began smoking when he was just a teenager, back when commercials of cool smoking cowboys still ran on television. By the time my uncle overcame his addiction, the damage had already been done.

Once treatment began, my uncle had to endure so many painful procedures, that at some point we had to weigh whether the procedure was going to make a difference and if the immense pain was worth it. By that time, as the doctors told us, his lungs were completely blackened. It was four months from when he received his diagnosis to when we laid him to rest. I was holding his hand when he finally passed.

I miss them both very much.



Oliver Teresa Pettis Ellis and grandchildren

Rep. Jessica Farrar

In honor of James Farrar

My father, James Farrar, was diagnosed with prostate cancer in March of 1996 during a routine physical. It was only after being persuaded by my mother and siblings that he needed to visit a doctor for a checkup that he even went for a physical.

At diagnosis, my Dad said "it felt strange as I hardly knew what a prostate was, much less what to do next." My dad is an architect and decided that this had to be his next project. He took off work to focus on learning everything he could about this cancer and what treatment options he had. Surgery seemed to be a likely option, so he took on the

task of getting himself in optimum health. My dad began working out two hours a day and completely changed his diet—very little meat and lots and lots of raw fruit!

Dad's operation was on June 17, 1996, just three months after he had been diagnosed. Since my dad worked for himself, he had no insurance, which was another part of this "project" he had to learn about and deal with.

With prostate cancer, doctors don't tell you that you are cured until five years have passed after surgery and only if you have not had a PSA test result of less than 0.1. Every six months for five years, his PSA was checked for the cancer. At the end of the five years, his doctor said: "I don't know what to say except you are cured!"

My dad has said that before surgery he acted like he was sort of an island—not needing help for most anything. Since this diagnosis, it was clear to him that he is no island and that we all need the help of others to get through our lives. Dad has said he successfully beat cancer with the help of "my family, my doctors, and my church."



Rep. Farrar (front) with her father (back left) and other family members.

Sen. Eddie Lucio, Jr.

In honor of Lynda Lucio Cisneros

When my daughter Lynda was diagnosed with leukemia five years ago, it knocked me off my feet. As the mother of my three young grandchildren, the possibility of losing her was unbearable. Our family just could not imagine life without Lynda.

When I was young, leukemia meant death. Thanks to treatments developed by modern science and research supported by organizations such as the American Cancer Society, we were truly relieved to learn that Lynda's cancer was treatable. We moved to Houston for six months and leased an apartment near M.D. Anderson Cancer Center where she was treated with



Sen Lucio and daughter Lynda at an American Cancer Society Relay For Life event.

dignity and respect as she received the latest therapies.

My prayers for Lynda were intense and focused. There were people with cancer all around us during that time and we prayed for them, too. We believe the power of prayer helped Lynda survive, and we are thankful to God that she's in remission now.

When Lynda was in the hospital, she asked me to do everything I could to make sure funding is there for research. As a member of the Texas Senate, I have strived to keep that promise.



Rep. Ruth Jones McClendon

Cancer Survivor

To say that I never dreamed that I would be telling you that I have been treated for lung cancer is an understatement. It's still hard to believe. Toward the end of the legislative session

of 2009, the fingers of my right hand began to tingle. My colleagues joked that it was because I was working so hard on the budget bill. It never occurred to me that it was cancer because I never was sick, but I knew I needed a doctor's attention for my hand. The day after a hand MRI, a brain MRI, and a chest x-ray, I was told they suspected lung cancer. I felt like someone had dropped a bowling ball in the middle of my stomach!

The actual diagnosis was stage IV non-small cell lung cancer. With news that severe, I could only feel sorry for myself for a very short time. I had to start fighting, and that's just what I did. I went through three months of radiation and chemotherapy, with minimal side effects. I was able to carry on a relatively normal schedule. I attended each day of the Special Session of the Legislature in July 2009. I continued making

public appearances, traveling, and meeting with my constituents and community leaders.

In October 2009, I learned that I was in remission: the treatment had been successful!

Now that I am a cancer survivor, I know what it's like from the inside. But, I wouldn't be here today if I hadn't listened to my body and sought help. I urge those who think they might need to see a doctor not to let fear hold you back—that fear might be the very thing that would prevent your recovery!

Now I want to share my success story and be an advocate for others diagnosed with cancer. I am living proof that a diagnosis of cancer is no longer a death sentence. It is not a walk in the park, but with early detection, proper diagnosis, and treatment, there is hope and joy.

My doctors tell me that I am a miracle. I say I am a survivor who is richly blessed by God. I have definitely been carried on the wings of prayer by my husband Denver, my family and friends.



With husband Denver

Rep. Elliott Naishtat

In memory of Molly Ivins

Perched atop a shelf in my Capitol office, Molly Ivins' stuffed armadillo stares down at me, a constant reminder of what I, as a legislator, must always focus on, or risk facing the wrath of a dear and special friend who succumbed to cancer in early 2007.

Molly Ivins was a fighter, a truth-seeker, a fearless and feisty award-winning journalist who took on the power



Rep. Naishtat and Molly Ivins

structure and never forgot the words of Ralph W. Yarborough: "Let's put the jam on the lower shelf so the little people can reach it."

Until the day she died, Molly never stopped fighting for freedom and justice. At parties and dinners at her house, during countless discussions about politics and the role of government, she would invariably glance at me, wink or nod her head, making sure my focus as a member of one of her favorite targets—the Texas Lege—would never falter.

And so I continue to work on issues that affect low-income families, children, the elderly, people with disabilities, minorities, victims of domestic violence and hate crimes, and all vulnerable populations. Molly Ivins would have it no other way. And her armadillo keeps a constant eye on me.



Sen. Jane Nelson

In honor of children with cancer



Sen. Nelson and Lance Armstrong visit Cook Children's. Photo by Liz Kreutz.

My involvement in the fight against cancer began in the early 1970s as a volunteer with the American Cancer Society. As a Society volunteer and, later, as Senate Health & Human Services Committee chair, I met many cancer survivors who spoke from the heart to share their personal stories. Women who went in for treatments, then went home to carpool; men who kept their promise to take their kids biking when all they wanted to do was sleep; teenagers who joked about their hair loss and, in doing so, made their peers feel comfortable.

In 2007, I had the privilege of traveling with Lance Armstrong and other advocates to promote the cancer bond initiative. I will never forget our visit to

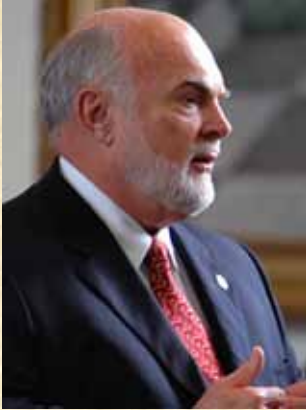


Cook Children's Hospital and the young patients I met—kids who inspired me with their courage.

My hope is that those young people will grow up to tell their children and grandchildren about a disease they once faced and defeated. A disease that, like polio, was eradicated through an historic effort.

Sen. Robert Nichols

In memory of my friend



My hunting buddy was the kind of guy you never worried about. Tall, strong, and confident, he was a comforting presence on hunt.

I felt reassured if I was ever injured he could carry me out of the woods and find help. However, at the end of his battle with cancer he weighed a mere 90 pounds and couldn't walk.

Even though I always thought he might have to carry me one day, because of cancer I had to carry my friend to the dock so that he could enjoy the view of the lake one last time.

Rep. Jim Pitts

In honor of Dinah Weable

Few words in the English language create more fear than the word "cancer." I recall that feeling when I heard that my district manager, Dinah Weable, had been diagnosed with breast cancer.

Dinah made a decision to have a mastectomy followed by reconstruction. After her surgery, she felt that sharing her breast cancer experience was the best way to encourage other women to have their annual mammograms. She kept a positive attitude and realized that early detection is the key to a full recovery. Dinah is now an eight-year survivor.

Dinah and her husband Ray started a foundation to benefit other breast cancer survivors. Each year they host a luncheon provided free of charge to survivors. Through donations from the community, their foundation is now funding mammograms for uninsured women in Ellis County.

Dinah has used her own experience with cancer to help make a difference in the lives of other women.



Rep. Ralph Sheffield

In honor of Meredith Sheffield



Josh and Meredith Sheffield before the cancer.

I believe that everyone knows what a horrible disease cancer is. But what is really scary is how quickly it can strike.

In October of 2008, our son Josh married his love Meredith. Her headaches started in November and they were told it was anemia and prescribed medication.

On December 20, 2008, Meredith was so ill that Josh rushed her to the emergency room. Within a few hours she was diagnosed with leukemia and they started chemotherapy. With the very aggressive treatment that Meredith endured, showing all of us what she was made of, she is in remission now.



Josh and Meredith in the hospital on the day he shaved her head.

Rep. Mark Strama

In honor of my father



Mark and Tom Strama

I was frightened when I found out my father had cancer. I suspect he was too, though you would never have known it.

He's a doctor, so he researched his options thoroughly, went on the attack, and won. And even better, he retired and moved to Austin, where his job as grandfather consumes almost as much time and energy as his previous career in medicine.

I know how many sad endings are caused by cancer; it's also worth highlighting the happy ones that research and medical advancements have enabled.

Rep. Armando Walle

In honor of my grandmother, Polly Zamarripa



Rep. Walle and his grandparents, Armando and Polly Zamarripa

My grandmother, Polly Zamarripa, was born in a rural area west of San Antonio and came to Houston in the 1960s. My grandfather was a union steelworker with Hughes Tools until he was laid off in the early 80s. To make ends meet, my grandmother cleaned houses. Somehow, in addition to working outside of the home and raising me and my siblings, she found time to volunteer in a local elementary school.

Between her impressive work ethic and her fortitude of spirit, my grandmother embodies what it means

to be a strong woman. My grandmother would take me and my brother and sisters to Purple Heart for secondhand clothes, but she would wash and iron them for us until they looked like new.

In 1985, she was diagnosed with cervical cancer. It was a trying time, and chance for all of us to support her. I am thankful beyond measure that she was able to beat cancer. Without the love and support of my grandmother, I would not be where I am today. She is my inspiration.

Sen. Kirk Watson

Cancer Survivor
In memory of my parents

Both of my parents waged difficult, painful battles against cancer. Those trials left me with a real understanding of the pain and fear that the disease inflicts on victims and their families.

So in early 1992, when I started to feel a pain I'd never felt before, I knew what I was up against.

I was eventually diagnosed with testicular cancer. That year alone, I underwent three surgeries and chemotherapy—which, we all thought, cured me. But my battle resumed two years later when, on a routine CT-scan, doctors found a tumor in my abdomen related to the original cancer, resulting in major abdominal surgery.

Finally in 1995, I was pronounced cancer-free. But my struggle to survive left a deep and lasting impact on me, my family, and my friends.

In a way, the cancer brought with it some gifts. One was the sense of freedom to do some things I'd always found a

reason not to do—like run for public office. It also left me striving to maintain a short-term focus with a long-term vision—two things that still drive my public service.

I try to focus on the moment I'm living in, but also to do things in a way that will allow success in the future if I'm lucky enough to live a long life. Because I know too well that best-laid long-term plans may never be met if sickness or tragedy strikes.



But cancer's greatest gift was the simple opportunity to survive it. I'm a much different person than I would have been without getting so sick.

While I survived my battle with cancer, my parents didn't survive theirs.

I say often that, if my family was going to have to suffer so much from this beast, it's a blessing that my mother got it first. In her long battle against it—which lasted decades, even though her doctors first told her we faced far too little time—she taught us all how to fight, and she showed me how to beat it.

It starts with never giving in.



Having cancer is hard. Finding help shouldn't be.

The American Cancer Society is here to help.

"There are a lot of rewarding phone calls. A cancer patient needed to travel to cancer treatments and needed help due to his limited income and extra expenses. I was able to find him hotel rooms during the course of several months and a grant for food and gas for traveling to treatments. He was so appreciative. I was glad I was able to help him so much. He told me he may not be here if it wasn't for the American Cancer Society and the help we provided to him."

- Margaret Weber, Patient Navigator, Patient Service Center

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*In memory of my grandmother, Marguerite
and the friends and family
of members of the Texas Legislature
who have been lost to cancer.*

*May cancer one day become
a disease of the past.
May others not be faced with
such a tragic loss.*

Ellen Arnold



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Myra Leo and Irma Rangel

In memory of my friend, Irma Rangel

Myra Leo, K&L Gates

My former boss and dear friend Irma Rangel became sick in 2000. She was a state representative at the time and a tireless advocate of education. Her motivation to stay alive was simply to continue her work at the Capitol and be the boss of those great staffers she loved.

It started with a fall in the shower; she thought she had a broken rib and went to the doctor for pain relief. He ignored the bruised rib area to quickly ask about the orange peel like skin on her breast area. She had just returned from Costa Rica and Irma responded it was probably “an insect bite or whatever.” Luckily, the doctor kept her hospitalized for several days until he diagnosed inflammatory breast cancer (IBC). This began a three-year journey that ended tragically with cancer spread to the brain.

Had she survived, I know she would have done everything to educate everyone she could about the dreaded C word. I was blessed to have known her and to learn of her strength and, more importantly,

her faith. Both were invaluable to me when I was also diagnosed with breast cancer, ductal carcinoma insitu. I was fortunate—all I needed was a lumpectomy and radiation.

Irma’s legacy will continue and people will always ask about the gal who championed so many firsts. She often said the most important thing one could ever do is to listen because, “If you are listening, you can then ask the right questions.” It is my hope that this tribute publication reaches those that will listen. I know Irma would appreciate it and be thankful that her cancer serves to remind us all that our time is short and that there is much to do.

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Dorothy (Noble) Strong (1929-2009)
and Bill Noble

*In honor of my Aunt Dorothy.
Her extraordinary legacy lives through
her children by birth,
her children by choice,
her grandchildren,
her extended family
and all those touched
by her generous spirit.
She ignited a room with her energy
and her smile always radiated joy.
We wish we had more time with her.*



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Noble Strategic Partners, Inc., is a full-service public affairs firm in Austin that provides local and statewide media relations, strategic ally recruitment, coalition building, message development, and internet and communications strategies for its clients.



*In memory of my
friend and colleague,
Susan C. Rocha,
who pioneered the field of
municipal law.
She will be missed.*

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Shelton & Valadez. How do we describe our firm and the attorneys, paralegals, and staff that comprise it? We're methodical, efficient, effective. We're disciplined and precise. We find clarity in issues, establish goals, and communicate continuously. That's our description. It's also the way our clients see us. That's why we are proud to say that the loyalty we have for our clients is reflected in the loyalty they show to us as well.

In honor of my loving 85-year-old mom, Inez,
who beat throat cancer 22 years ago!



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In memory of Perry Bradley

Joe Gagen,
Friend of the American Cancer Society

In loving memory of Horacio Guerra, Sr.



In honor of my mother, Gloria

James Gray, American Cancer Society

When I was three months old, my mom went for a postnatal checkup and was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, which is usually difficult to treat because it can be advanced before it is discovered.

Because her cancer was detected early, my mother survived deadly ovarian cancer and managed to raise five children. We are so lucky to still have her with us.

If not for my birth and that checkup, she might not have been around to be a mother to my siblings and me. My three daughters might not have ever met their grandmother.

I've always felt a little special that I played an important part in her survival.

James Gray



James Gray

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Gloria and her three granddaughters



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JOIN THE FIGHT.**

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) is the leading voice of people with cancer and their families. Join us to support policies that save lives, such as increasing funding for groundbreaking cancer research, ensuring access to quality health care, discouraging tobacco use and helping people quit smoking. Be a voice. Hold your leaders accountable. www.acscan.org



Did we miss your story?

No problem. We plan to repeat this publication next year and will be collecting stories for 2012.

If you have a cancer-related story to tell and would like to be included in the 2012 edition, contact:

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OR

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