

My husband and I moved to California Dec 30, 2005. I had lived on the east coast my whole life so this was a new adventure. I loved the weather and I was walking everywhere. I was 49 years old and was in great shape and looking forward to an exciting new year. I love walking on the beach, reading books, spending time with my wonderful grandchildren. My passion is riding horses and I couldn't wait to find a place to ride in California.

I had worked for the Columbia Association in Columbia, MD for more than 15 years. I was at the gym three or four times a week, doing aerobics classes, swimming, weight lifting, biking... anything to keep me active and in shape.

I have a horse named Jackson that I rode at least 3 times a week when I lived in Maryland. I ride him almost every day whenever I go back to Maryland to visit. He keeps me active and I love riding. We go on long trail rides. I remember a time when I took a trail ride and the grass was so green I took off Jack's saddle and bridle and just let him eat the grass. I had brought a book with me so I sat down in the grass with Jack to read. He always stayed close to me and never went anywhere. Well, this day he decided he wanted to go home. He took one look at me and took off running. He ran all the way back to the barn and got in his stall. I was surprised he took off without me. But I'm the one that had taken off his bridle so I walked back to the barn, a good 2 miles. He was standing there waiting for me, like "hey, where have you been?" How could I get mad at him, he was in his stall munching on hay and patiently waiting for me to return.

It was April 2, 2005 and I was doing sit-ups in my living room when I felt a lump in my left breast. It scared me. I was remembering my mom and when she found her lump and it was cancer.

I flew to Maryland to meet with my gyn and he examined my breast and said I don't think it is anything to worry about. Have your mammogram in the next 6 months and see what comes of the lump. I did not want to wait for 6 months so I called Advanced Radiology where I had gone before for my mammograms. They told me to come right in. The mammogram did not show the lump even though we could feel it. So they did an ultrasound. My radiologist called me into her office and told me I should schedule a biopsy as soon as possible. Now, I'm scared. I flew back to California and got on the phone trying to find a surgeon. I called UCLA Revlon Breast Center and got an appointment. I met with Dr. Robert Bennion and he took down my history and said let's just take it out.

I had a lumpectomy on April 28, 2005. Surgery went well and I was home by the end of the afternoon. Dr. Bennion told me he would call me with the results as soon as he had them. On May 5, 2005 I got the call that said I had cancer -- Invasive Ductal Carcinoma. He said a lot of things, but all I heard was "cancer." Dr. Bennion told me I needed to schedule another surgery to remove more tissue around the lump and he would be checking my lymph nodes. June 2, 2005 I had my second surgery. I had two lymph nodes that were removed. You ask yourself why me? What did I do wrong? Am I being punished? I thought these things for awhile but then after it was all over I knew I went through all of this for a reason.

It was to make me stronger, to help other women

with cancer. God doesn't let us go through these trials for no reason. He was building me up for bigger & better things.

June 28, 2005 -- I met with my oncologist -- Dr. Robert Decker at Tower Hematology in Beverly Hills. He was recommended by a friend from church. July 6, 2005 was my first chemo of Adriamycin/Cytosan. I had 3 more treatments of Adriamycin/Cytosan

Each one was 3 weeks apart. One week I was sick & weak and then two weeks of feeling fine. I lost my hair about 3 weeks after the 1st chemo. It is devastating to lose your hair. I cried and cried when I finally had my husband shave it off.

In between chemo treatments I would fly to Maryland to visit family & friends. I had my wonderful horse, Jackson, who I couldn't wait to ride. My oncologist didn't think I should ride since I was weak but nothing could keep me off my horse. We know each other so well and I cherished our time together and the rides we took through the fields in Maryland.

I had 4 more chemo treatments of Taxol. Taxol goes directly to your joints so it hurts like a million microscopic jackhammers. 3 more treatments of Taxol and I was finished with chemo. December 19th was my last chemo treatment. I was still weak at Christmas but my husband surprised me with a pair of roller blades. I really wanted a pair. I couldn't wait to rollerblade on the sidewalk at the beach.

I had 38 radiation treatments. I didn't mind the radiation treatments. I was so glad to be finished and get on with my life.

In 2007, I walked with my sister Tina Wenrich in Relay for Life in Beaver Springs, PA. We both walk to remember our mother Shirley Wenrich who passed away from cancer.

I've met some wonderful people here in California and I've been blessed to have a place to ride horses. I usually ride three times a week in Malibu. What a wonderful way to spend your day! We ride in the canyons and you can see the ocean along with the beautiful mountains.

My husband & I started a foundation called Marathon of Miracles which is a 501C3 non profit organization with a mission to inspire, educate and empower cancer survivors. We care about the quality of life for survivors and their families. We want to make a difference in the lives of cancer survivors. We have a social network website -- www.survivorcelebration.com. We hope to build up this website and encourage everyone that has been affected by cancer to sign up. Our future plans for the foundation include opening a retreat center in Malibu for cancer patients/survivors and their families to experience an all-expense paid life-changing visits. The retreat center will embrace a holistic approach to surviving and thriving including equine therapy, natural remedies, environmental detoxification, healthy diet, mental and physical training, music, laughter, walks on the beach and other therapeutic activities.