

# Survivor proud to be part of Relay

In March of 2008, at the age of 62, a woman who really shouldn't be tested anymore was once again given another challenge— maybe her biggest one yet.

There were no early warning signs. Mom felt a little abdominal discomfort after a long afternoon shift at work. The pain continued to get worse. My father knows how tough she is, so when he came home to find her on the floor doubled over he was panicked and scared. He rushed her to Georgetown hospital.

From there she was taken to Oakville/Trafalgar Hospital for additional testing. She was diagnosed initially with diverticulitis and the doctor scheduled a colonoscopy to find out more and how severe it was. We were happy. We could deal with this. Thankfully, her family doctor referred her to another specialist for a second opinion who performed a colonoscopy right away. The results: stage 3 colon cancer. Surgery was performed almost immediately.

Over two-thirds of her colon was removed, along with several surrounding lymph nodes: two of 15 which tested positive for cancer. She spent two months recovering from the surgery followed by six months of aggressive chemotherapy.

She had a chemo session every two weeks. She would go to the Cancer Centre at Credit Valley Hospital on a Monday, get two chemo drugs injected there over a 3-4 hour session, come home with the third slow-releasing treatment still attached to her through an infusion pump we called the "baby bottle". On the Wednesday a

nurse would come to the home to disconnect the pump and change her dressing. Then she would spend the next 10 days recovering, dealing with the building side effects and trying to regain strength; only to go through the cycle all over again. Chemo ended by Christmas of 2008.

Since then she has recovered from the side effects. She gradually regained her strength. Her mental, emotional and spiritual strength has never been stronger.

She had her post therapy CT scan and colonoscopy one year after the diagnosis of the disease and I am very happy to say that for now, she is cancer-free. Five is the magic number though so if she can go five years without the cancer returning, it may never come back.

This "fight", which is approaching the two-year mark, has opened our eyes to what the Cancer Society does and has to offer to those with cancer and to their families. It is through events such as the June 4 Relay for Life that we raise money to fight this fight. My mother is proud to be a part of the Relay as a survivor and a team member. She considered herself lucky to be able to participate in 2009 and to walk the survivor lap. We will be participating again in 2010 and I am happy to say that mom will be walking with us again.

—Article by Lucy Gagro, of Georgetown, a committee member and team captain for the Georgetown Relay for Life. Article submitted by Canadian Cancer Society (Ontario Division) Brampton/Caledon/Georgetown/Dufferin County

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