

COLUMN

Friend falls to her battle with cancer

She was young, maybe in her late 40's, the first time she attended the Breast Cancer Support Group at ETMC-Tyler.

We all took to her immediately.

We couldn't help it. Roxanne had a smile that radiated and invited you into her world.

"Come back next time and come to camp," we survivors sang out, as though in a chorus.

Roxanne did come back and became a welcome part of our round-table discussions. She kept current on new developments in cancer treatment, nutrition and exercise. The breast and ovarian cancer survivor was smart.

She fit right in with the regulars in our group, whom I jokingly called "three nurses, a home economist and a health nut." When Roxanne attended, it was always a worthwhile Thursday afternoon for us all.

Roxanne did sign up for the spring 2005 ETMC's Camp Getaway and was on my team during the icebreaker games. We seven highly competitive team members didn't win the rivalry, but we definitely began new friendships.

During the next three days as old timers and newbies alike took an active part in activities, Roxanne was no longer our new kid on the block.

When camp was over she continued to come to group. Her beautiful hair was growing from once-bald short to curly-chemo-hair and back to wavy-again normal.

At the Fall Camp Getaway in October, Roxanne and I were roommates. She fit my definition of the perfect roommate: she didn't snore and didn't stay up late; she was an interesting conversationalist and had a positive attitude about camp and life in general. This time Roxanne was one of the old timers showing first timers around Pine Cove.

As the cancer survivor got healthier, she got busy with the needs of her husband, teenaged daughter and young son.

And, as is sometimes the case, Roxanne didn't attend group as often as we would have liked her to do.

In May 2007 Roxanne was not on the list of registered campers. On the first evening, during the icebreaker session, I looked across the large room to see who had just entered.

She was tall, slim, with recognizable wavy premature salt-and-pepper hair. But, with a drawn face and sunken eyes, she looked like a woman much older than breast and ovarian cancer survivor we had not seen in a while.

"Is that Roxanne?" I said to my friend Nancy Eckert who was sitting next to me.

Nancy looked hard and then said, "I think so."

"Oh, no" we moaned quietly. Had there been a recurrence?

As soon as the session was over, I rushed over to greet the latecomer.

"I'm so glad you're here."

"I found out about camp late, and they just had a cancellation," said Roxanne.

"Do you have a roommate?" I jumped in.

"I'm staying with the counselors."

"My roommate didn't check in. Would you like to room together again," I asked.

"Sure," she said with that radiant Roxanne smile.

Just like two years ago, we shared Room 202. But unlike two years ago, it was not the vibrant Roxanne I had known.

I asked how she had been doing since I hadn't seen her for several months. "Okay," was the quiet response, telling me she wasn't ready to talk about it. Respecting her privacy, I left it at that.

Roxanne's attendance at the



ANTOINETTE JACKSON

*Mangia!
Mangia!*

next day's activities was sparse. She was an active participant in the music therapy session. But, most of the time she chose to relax and rejuvenate, while soaking in the beauty of nature all around her.

Wednesday night she told me "My cancer is back."

"I thought so," I answered. We talked but, following her lead, we skirted major issues.

Early the next morning, I found myself sitting on a bench quietly amid the tall pines questioning the turns of the cancer journey. It's not unusual to see a camper's health has waned between camp sessions. One learns to accept the loss when it's the older of us who have lived a full life that are failing. But, you never accept the possibility of losing the younger ones.

And maybe while at Pine Cove, amid the roses, evening lighted cross and the still waters, it's the time and place to come to closer grips with acceptance.

As we were packing to go home Thursday just before lunch, I said to Roxanne, "I guess next time I'll have to pack a bottle of garlic-infused olive oil for camp."

"Why is that?" she asked gently.

"Because I can't handle all that greasy salad dressing all over my greens."

My tongue-in-cheek answer invoked another one of those precious Roxanne smiles, followed by; "You're always the Italian, aren't you, Antoinette?"

"You know, you're like family to me Roxanne. If you ever need me, day or night, please call."

"You've reached out your hand in friendship and love so many times," she answered. "I appreciate that."

When our husbands arrived, Roxanne and I posed for a picture outside our door, then we hugged goodbye.

As Jack walked me to the parking lot, I looked back at the young woman stepping slowly and purposely beside her husband, Brent.

She looked even thinner and more vulnerable than that first evening.

In June, we learned Roxanne had taken a turn for the worse. Her sister Wendy, an R.N., left her family, job and home in South Dakota to be by her side and help with her care.

For the next three months, Roxanne valiantly battled her metastatic disease. Her courage and stamina extended the valuable days remaining with her husband Brett, her daughter Jennifer, and her son Zack.

On Aug. 20, 2007, at the age 53, Roxanne Marie Snell passed from this life into eternity. Psalms 90:10 says, "Seventy years are given to us!" (Living Bible) I still don't understand why someone so young was called home before her appointed years.

My only comfort is I know the Good Lord who loves Roxanne loves her even more than those of us here on earth do.

He knows the alpha and the omega - the beginning and the end - and in His infinite wisdom, He chose to move Roxanne to the front of the line and bring her early to her heavenly home.

Author's note: October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. If you haven't already done so, why not schedule your annual mammogram now, while you are thinking of it?

CARTOON



COLUMN

East Texas great for golf courses

This makes two columns in a row about golf.

Can I help it if East Texans are nutty about their golf? If we keep this up, I bet the editor is going to move this column to the sports page.

You would think reading the sports section would help me understand sports, but I've tried that. Therefore, I am grateful to the golfers who helped me pull together today's list. So, here's the scoop.

Having loved and played the sport for over 40 years, Tim Wheeler, of Chandler, sent me his four favorite public courses.

His reasons for choosing them are fascinating.

Wheeler writes that these are the courses that he believes "are superior to any other public courses available out there.

■ Pine Dunes Resort, Frankston, "A Jay Morrish design that is a jewel," writes Wheeler. "It has one of the most difficult par threes in East Texas, number six, as well as a dual fairway par five.

Well thought out design and you can tell it when you play. This I believe is Morrish's first course he designed without Tom Weiskopf his former partner and a former British Open Champion."

■ Twin Lakes Golf Course, Canton, which Wheeler says is a very difficult golf course. "This course is LONG from the tips. This course is built within a 900 acre container plant and tree farm.

When playing holes 17 and 18, it looks like something one might see in Napa Valley California with the rows of container plants on the rolling hills resembling the look of vineyards.

It is owned by the Gideon (Deon) Dekkers family formerly from South Africa."

■ Garden Valley Golf and Resort, Garden Valley, which he says has a wonderful layout. Wheeler challenges anyone to find a more beautiful back nine in Texas, especially in the spring with the native dog-



CATHY KRAFVE

*Checklist
Charlie*

woods in bloom along with the numerous azaleas sprinkled among the course. "A must play," he adds.

■ Oak Hurst Golf Course, Bullard, is a nice little golf course to play, according to Wheeler. "I really like the design; although I must admit that number 10 could be better.

The late Carlton Gibson, who also designed Eagle's Bluff on Lake Palestine, designed it. I believe that the late Mr. Gibson was at one time the greens keeper at Cherry Hills in Denver, Col., home to a U. S. Open in the 1960's.

The greens here can be suspect at times, but all in all, a fun course to play."

Wheeler adds, "There obviously are many other fine public golf course in and around Tyler that I really do not have much information on and rarely, if ever, play."

Golf fan, Harry Casserta of Tyler, tells me that his favorite course is Willowbrook Country Club. He adds that the best thing about golf at Willowbrook is golf pro, Chris Hudson.

Casserta, who just finished a volunteer stint as president of the club, says "Chris Hudson has rejuvenated the program at Willowbrook."

Accomplished amateur and collegiate players from all over the U.S. seek Hudson out for instruction, according to Casserta who claims to be Hudson's only failure.

Casserta's other favorite thing about Willowbrook, founded in 1922, is the tradition; this from the man whose love of golf began as a youngster working in the pro shop along with the current president, Robert Bailes, and assisting the legendary, George Slicks" Brooks.

He says tradition has it that the course is "an unsigned work of art designed by golf course architect Ralph Plummer."

I'm not done with golf yet, folks.

I still want to know which benefit golf tournaments you like the best, for example, the one that happened last Monday at Eagle's Bluffs to benefit the Bullard Library.

Jane Prokesh of Bullard writes that the tournament included all kinds of fun, like chances at big prizes- my favorite was the golf cart- for a hole in one, raffles, and other entertaining ways to spend the day, like playing Mah Jongg and bridge, not to mention hamburgers, salads, and a wine and cheese event.

I'm looking forward to reporting here how much money was raised for the library.

Look for the "Reader's List Favorite Benefit Golf Tourneys" in this column later this fall. E-mail me your favorites if you want them included.

There are three new bags of clubs at my house, none of which belong to me.

Still, I am excited about clipping this column and tucking it away in the pocket of my husband's new golf bag.

A special thanks to those who contributed their knowledge to this week's list, Tim Wheeler, Harry Casserta, and Jane Prokesh.

I'm discovering that one of the lovely things about writing a weekly column is the chance it provides to catch up with old friends and make new ones.

Just for the record, my favorite sport is Little League baseball.

However, Doris "Dot" West of Bullard just gave me three reasons why East Texans are nuts for football.

So, write me. The next lists are already forming.

■ **Cathy Primer Krafve, aka Checklist Charlie, lives in East Texas with her family and while she can't swing a club, she never passes up the opportunity to drive "those sporty little golf carts."**

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