

Joannie Witt – Ft. Lauderdale, FL (formerly of N. GA):

I was diagnosed in September, 1996, at 37 years of age with Stage 2 breast cancer. The cancer had spread to my lymph nodes and required that I have a complete mastectomy. My doctor's, my husband and I made a decision to treat my cancer very aggressively. Following the mastectomy and reconstruction I had six rounds of high dose chemotherapy, a stem-cell transplant, and finally radiation. October of this year will be ten years that by the grace of God I remain cancer free. Ten is a very good number!

When my twin sister, Jeannie sent me that article to walk in the inaugural Avon 3-day in Atlanta, my first thought was "I can't walk 60 miles in 3 days! I've had cancer, for goodness sake!" Then I thought back to all of the struggles that I had gone through in fighting this disease, in literally fighting for my life. During those 9 months from diagnosis through radiation I had learned to love my body. I learned to love and appreciate my life and to be thankful for every single day and to not take just being able to walk outside, feel the sun shining on my face and the wind at my back for granted. I wanted others to see that yes, I had cancer, and yes, it sucked! But here I was, and here I am, ten years later...not just alive, but thriving!

In many ways my life is better because of my experience with breast cancer. I have met amazing people and formed friendships that I would have never made except through my personal experience. So while I wouldn't wish this horrible disease on anyone, as Maya Angelo says, "I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now".

Joannie Witt's story (continued)

That's why I walk. I walk to celebrate my survival. I walk to share with my dear sister, "my other half" on a level that you can't possibly understand unless you have grown in a womb together with another person. I walk to encourage others to love yourself, to love your life, to cherish it. I walk to show others that you can not only survive this disease, you can thrive! And most importantly, I walk with my sisters, my team mates, my "Circle of Friends" to raise funds and awareness so that others will have access to early detection and treatment and will not have to lose their breasts, and sometimes still, their lives.

SURVIVOR



Joannie Witt with twin sister Jeannie Sanders
"My Other Half"