

TO ALL MY FRIENDS

After a little more than a year of fighting two bouts with malignant tumors—first in the lung, then in the brain—I think it is high time that you read a few words directly from me.

Cancer is a disease of both physical and emotional losses. Sometimes I don't know which are worse. Both are devastating and most are permanent, changing only in degree and stage in my disease, treatment and mental attitude. The trick is to deal with the changes and losses as they occur, and to deal with the concomitant shock, fear, anger, frustration, anxiety, panic, depression, loneliness, despair and thousands of other burning emotions. The idea is to translate the turbulence into something meaningful, hopeful and almost acceptable. This is a chore of constant hard work and help from professionals, friends and family. And just when you think you have one issue resolved, something changes, and you have to battle it again. The excellent doctors who care for me cannot promise miracles, but they can give me endless encouragement, which they do. All we can hope for is daily progress and a good prognosis for the near future. So far, I have both.

Cancer is also a disease of gains. I have learned a great deal about myself, as an individual and in relation to others. I learned a great deal about cancer—the dreadful statistics and the anecdotal miracles. When I visited the *RADIOCARBON* office the other day, I met a professor whom I hadn't seen for some time. He was extremely happy to see me and said, "By this time you must be the wisest person in the world." Sometimes I feel wise, but other times I feel just as confused as when this all started.

I learned how wonderful my family could be, especially my daughters, who crossed the country time after time, as if they rode a shuttle bus instead of an airplane; my friends from the east coast and beyond, who dropped their busy careers, and came to care for me for a week or more following surgery and during treatment; my many friends in Tucson for their endless support and devotion; the *RADIOCARBON* staff who took charge of all the backlogged work and completed one project after another, and set up the "Delicious Deliveries" fund (which has not yet run out!); the Geosciences Department, in particular, and the University of Arizona, in general, for showing so much kindness, helpfulness and generosity with all the "red tape" of claims and forms, *etc.*; and my *RADIOCARBON* friends for sending tons of letters, cards, notes, e-mail messages, gifts and contributions. I mention here another personal event relevant to my department and university. Recently, I read an article on the front page of our local newspaper. The photograph of a woman with a bald head caught my attention. The article described how this woman was fired from her job because she did not have the energy to keep up with her usual performance due to chemotherapy treatments for breast cancer. I cannot describe my feelings and my gratitude for my good fortune!

A new world opened up to me when I became involved with therapy at the Arizona Cancer Center and the University Medical Center. How lucky can a person possibly be to have ongoing in Tucson, state-of-the-art cancer research and to benefit from new and aggressive programs? But to build bonds with courageous patients, brilliant and compassionate doctors who became friends, skilled and caring technicians and nurses is an experience I would not want to have missed.

It will take me a while to re-enter the *RADIOCARBON* world, and I cannot promise that I will, fully. David Sewell is doing a splendid job of being Acting Managing Editor, which he could not manage without the full support and expertise of Kim Tanner Elliott. My presence will occasionally pervade the hallways of *RADIOCARBON*, overseeing and advising on some of the activities and projects, wherever possible. I look forward to our renewals (of friendship, of course)!

Renee Kra