



*April 27, 2014 by speakuptocancer*

There is a story behind every book. Why is it created? How is it meant to impact on society or upon individual minds? Is it written to inspire, excite, tantalize, or to provide guidance? Is there the intent to stimulate questions or to provide answers? Was the author motivated by a dream; political injustice, or by an actual experience in life? It is said that every snow flake has a different shape. It is probably equally true that each author has a unique mind set when creating or compiling a new book.

Surviving Cancer: Our Voices & Choices actually began indirectly as a response to individuals coming together to see sculptures created out of radiation cradles. These sculptures were shown in a variety of environments to encourage early detection. Fortunately, art shows often stimulate conversations among viewers. What was of particular interest at these shows was the interaction of cancer survivors, mostly female, but including some males as well. The exchanges carried on between viewers, at the *Image Early* show, encouraged the staff at the Center for Contemporary Art to plan a panel presentation, followed by a discussion.

A panel was selected. Four cancer survivors and two doctors spent part of an evening, giving their perspectives relating to personal cancer experiences and sharing a vast fund of knowledge. The audience responded with an endless number of questions. One could literally feel the fear relating to cancer disintegrate as the interchange progressed. That evening it became evident that in spite of all the information provided by the Internet, organizations and support networks, a simple guide that could somehow simulate our presentations, would be extremely valuable.

As a result of all the questions asked on the evening of our *Image Early* panel presentation; it became evident that a guide which would quietly and clearly walk cancer patients through the cancer experience,

would help individuals who are frightened by a major disease that has yet to be eradicated by improved scientific experimentation, more advanced procedures and superior medications. As Eitan Yefenof, Ph.D., Professor and Director of the Lautenberg Center for Immunology at the Hebrew University, says so succinctly to his staff: "There are people beyond the laboratory bench who need you and the work you are doing. Don't Let them down."

Although I enjoy writing, as many visual artists do, discussing cancer, outside of my own cancer experience, was definitely far beyond my area of expertise. So how could I, an individual who is unable to provide the expertise needed, encourage even more individuals to be aware of early detection, help to lessen the fear factor involved regarding cancer and provide accurate information to help cancer patients?

I realized very quickly that to do so would mean contacting experts in numerous fields relating to cancer, as well as asking survivors who had experienced a variety of aspects of this frightening, varied disease, to share their expertise, advice and experiences.

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