

My mother, Joan Marie Melick not only battled kidney cancer once, but twice. In 1997, she was diagnosed with a very large tumor on her kidney. It appeared from the x-ray to be resting right on her inferior vena cava. This was a dangerous location for the tumor to be. Thanks to God and her wonderful surgeon, she had both the tumor and her kidney removed. He was able to remove it successfully from near the vena cava. It was a miracle. The recovery was tough, but my mother was so strong and determined. Within four months, she was back at work and we were going out to lunch, shopping, and traveling just like before.

The next 10 years of my mother's life were spent traveling all over Europe with me, her only child. We had traveled since I was 5 years old, but there was something so special about the last 10 years. You see, after the kidney surgery, my mom seemed even stronger and more energetic than ever before. I kept telling her the surgeon slipped in an Eveready battery! :) She was unstoppable. Walking all over Europe in France, London, Poland, Amsterdam, Italy, Spain and many more. We walked so much on our trips and Mom was outdoing me. It was marvelous! It was like after the surgery, she wanted to live life even more and travel as much as she could. It was the most splendid time for both of us! Mom and I were so close, and we were really good travel partners.

Sadly, in 2007 my mother began to lose a lot of weight, but she felt fine. After awhile she started feeling more weak and tired, and she said something was wrong. She didn't feel right, and she felt like the cancer was back. She went to the specialist, and she got kidney cancer again on her remaining kidney. It was something neither of us wanted to hear, but Mom knew. So now she was ten years older and she didn't know how much she could do this time. She only had the one kidney left and the cancer had progressed. I selfishly wanted her to live forever and called specialists, hospitals, etc., to try to find a way to save her. We even got her into the National Institute of Health in Maryland for a trial surgery and they only accept extreme cases, and she was such a case. You see only three to five percent of people who have a successful kidney removal ever get kidney cancer in the remaining kidney. My mom did. However, now she was 71 years old, thin, and weaker than 10 years ago, and she just didn't want to do anything else. She was tired. I finally saw and realized that when they gave us the horrible possibilities of this trial surgery. I knew there was no way Mom would do it and I understood. The risks were too great and she wanted to live what time she had left without being in bed, hooked up to machines, etc. It broke my heart, but this wasn't about me, it was about my beloved mother. So my terrific Mom and I share some lunches, some wonderful talks, and many doctor appointments, blood tests, etc., the last few months of her life.

My wonderful Mother passed away on July 27, 2008 at the age of 71. I miss her and think of her every single day. She was such an inspiration and I am so grateful that she was my mother! I am such a lucky lady. I have all of my Mother's photo albums of all of our trips. To have those memories with her those last 10 years is so important to me. It means everything to me. That was what Mother lived for -- traveling and sharing her life with me. I am so glad that we got that opportunity! She is now my angel in heaven, watching over me each and everyday. I pray for all of those people with kidney cancer or who are affected by it. We need a cure and to get the word out about this disease. I, for one, would have loved to have my mother around for many, many more years!