



Sheila's Story

Breast Cancer



Sheila is happy that spring is here. She looks forward to the warmer temperatures and dryer days ahead, because she still has a lot of work to do.

Although she is retired after over 20 years as a screen cartoonist in Los Angeles, Sheila, 70, is now focused on a new project... documenting through photography the 100 year old homes in the Irvington district.

Living in a Victorian-style home that will hit the century mark next year, Sheila, who moved to Portland three years ago, has fallen in love with the creative combinations of bright colors painted on the homes in the district. She has already photographed yellow, red, orange, purple and even black homes, and hopes to find many more as the weather gets better.

For a woman with the ambition to explore a neighborhood like Irvington on foot and take pictures of homes from several different angles, feeling tired after chemotherapy treatments gets in the way. For Sheila, that has been the hardest part of having cancer.

In 1999, Sheila was diagnosed with breast cancer. She received treatment, which included a mastectomy and chemotherapy in California, but the cancer had spread to her liver. Early treatments went well, and at her three-month follow-up, her liver appeared clear.

When she moved to Portland, Northwest Cancer Specialists was recommended to her for follow-up care and she began seeing Dr. John Smith II. Routine testing in January 2005 uncovered that the cancer in her liver had returned. Armed with a "do whatever it takes" attitude, Sheila is now participating in a clinical trial that uses a chemical originally extracted from deep sea sponges to shrink tumors. Her treatment is given IV 3 weeks in a row followed by one week of rest. It has caused a remarkable shrinkage in her cancer and she continues on treatment because of this.

Sheila has great faith in her physicians and is participating in the trial because she wants to give herself every chance to beat this disease. While her days are busy with physical therapy appointments several times each week, weekly chemotherapy treatments, and taking care of her cats Emily and Charlotte (who are named after the Bronte sisters) and her two dogs, Sheila believes this new treatment is working to reduce her tumors, and hopes after this round of chemotherapy, she'll be in remission.

Then, she'll have more time and energy to discover the beauty of the homes that surround her.