

“A bend in the road, a year’s journey through breast cancer,” by author Karen Kelly Boyce. In her book, she chronicles her experience as a breast cancer patient. Proceeds will benefit the research of two CINJ Physicians.

With their children now grown, retirement life for urban dwellers Karen Kelly Boyce and her husband Michael led to a rural adventure. They brought a 125-year-old farm in the Pine Barrens to renovate and set about breeding Nigerian Dwarf Goats. Karen fulfilled her dream of writing, becoming a published author. And then, her life took what she calls a bend in the road---breast cancer.

“It was the first mammogram I ever had, and I’m even an R.N.,” Karen admits, “I only did it at my doctor’s insistence, and planned never to do it again. It was a ‘miracle’. It detected what turned out to be breast cancer at only stage one.”

Karen is now cancer free and has written a book about her breast cancer experience. “This book was much harder to write than my fiction,” she states, “but I wrote it in hopes it will help someone else going through the experience. I include things that helped me, nutrition, prayer, meditation, and some ways to promote humor.”

“When I started this book, I was sure it would be a comedy. Cancer can be so depressing. I wanted to take a different view. So many experiences have been downright funny. I wanted to share that, to make you laugh. A strange thing happened however, when I started to write my great comedy. I couldn’t do it...My journey through breast cancer was both joyful, and sad. I laughed and I cried. I lost faith and yet clung to hope. This was the whole truth, and nothing but the whole truth was worth telling...”

In an excerpt from a chapter titled ‘The Wig’ Karen achieves both the humor she was seeking as well as the unvarnished truth of her experience:

“...I had never worn a wig. Once I worked the night shift with a nurse who wore a wig every night...She was in her late sixties but somehow decided that a blond wig worthy of Madonna would make her look younger. She would apply the shoulder length wig to her head, then pin a large starched nurse’s cap to the wig...The weight of the cap would have the wig sliding around her head all night...The sight of this wrinkled nurse with the long blond curls and spinning cap probably scared or cured many a patient...I decided from this experience, that I needed help in picking out my wig. So as expected, I called my best friend. We would make buying my wig a day trip that would include lunch...”

Later in the chapter.

“...Seventeen nights after my first chemotherapy treatment, I was turning over in the middle of the night. I reached up to brush some hair out of my face and woke up in shock.

The hair I had brushed out of my face was now in my hand and not at all attached to my scalp. Reaching up in the dark, I took a large clump of hair at the top of my head in my hand and gave it a gentle tug. It easily came loose from my scalp...It was three o'clock in the morning and as my husband snored peacefully beside me, the thought of going back to sleep and waking up in a bed full of hair suddenly disgusted me. I plodded barefoot into the bathroom. Looking in the mirror, I simply grabbed the scissors and started cutting..."

Karen will donate proceeds from her book to the research of Drs. Antoinette Tan and Thomas Kearney, who treated her "The team approach at CINJ saved my life," she states, "I knew where I was at all times. They were wonderful." We are grateful to you, Karen, for sharing your experience in your talented voice for the benefit of others. Karen is currently seeking a national publisher because she wants to make "as much money as possible" for Dr. Tan's and Dr. Kearney's research. We will update you of the book's availability in our fall issue. In the interim, check for updates and information on how to purchase the book on the Boyce Farm website www.queenofangelsfarm.com or you can reach Karen directly at 908-278-3470

This article was written by Carol Serrell, Associate Director of Grants and Communications at the Cancer Institute of New Jersey and published in *Gaining Ground*, a publication for the friends of the Cancer Institute of New Jersey Foundation