

SORRY, NO POLLYANNA FINISH.....

I can't sit here and write about the good things having cancer has done for my life. Having cancer is rotten, it is miserable, it is boring and hateful. It changes your life, puts your plans on hold, and takes hope away at times. It can destroy your physical appearance, upset your stomach and most of all, it can just plain hurt.

But people have, and do survive. The will to life is strong in our race. We will risk terrible fates to get that second shot at living. The indomitable human spirit.

It lives, it thrives, it survives. Humans reach out to each other, they share energy. Life is to be loved, to be lived, to be fought for. And if this fails, and life ends, it still cannot be in vain.

I AIN'T LAUGHING

As a teacher in a school for the physically and mentally handicapped, I am blessed with a lively and thoroughly enjoyable occupation. It was very important to be able to continue working. The children, their antics, teaching and preparing lessons has kept me active, involved and too busy to worry about myself. The principal and whole staff at the school were totally accommodating to my needs, doctor appointments and therapy schedules. A friend at school was even permitted to drive me to my appointments as I have distaste for driving and didn't like going to the "treatment" alone. Everyone offered sincere help and support. One extra special friend even did my ironing for me. Now (except your Mom) who would offer to iron for anyone else. I had no experience of people shying away or rejecting me because of my condition. I received love and attention and very practical kinds of help which allowed me to continue working and functioning fairly normally.

There's alot of talk about cancer support groups and its very important aspect of coping with the disease. I happened to have many close friends and relatives who offered all of the emotional and practical support we needed. These people became my "support" group without actually realizing it. It's a tough struggle and you need all the help you can get. You can't be afraid to receive help from friends, family or a hospital sponsored support group, although it takes some stubborn folks awhile to receive graciously. I am eternally grafeul to these people for the energy they shared with my husband and myself.

My students offered a different kind of support without even knowing it. Simply by being children they constantly lifted my spirits. My health not allowing us to have children of our own, these children accepted all of my maternal love and returned it a thousand fold. We laughed and hugged, worked and played together every day. I learned how important it was to stop a particularly frustrating lesson and take a walk or run around the building. When a child might be reprimanded for forgetting his manners or for being "rude" the others wanted to make sure that they would not compromise their innocence by snickering at their classmates. With poker straight faces, they would chant in unison, "I ain't laughing" (which would inevitably bring a smile to my lips.) Well, thanks to these children I still am laughing. (You might think you'd lose the ability to laugh when dealing with such serious problems, but thank God for that class of kids. They only knew I occasionally had to visit the doctor.) The telltale bandage on the arm would bring troubled looks to their faces- did you get a shot? Did it hurt? Did you cry? (Several of the most sensitive ones knew when I would feel badly. One little boy would sneak a hug shyly. Another girl brough me presents and an occasional kiss. one little guy made it a point to tell me "have a nice evening". These "mentally retarded" children showed more love and sensitivity toward me and each other than any group of "normal" youngsters I've ever met. And most important lessons are those in caring and sharing. They teach me every day of things- to smile, to laugh, to feel joy. Sometimes "I ain't laughing" but thank God I still know how.)