



April, 2017

Marg Foran - a hard nut to crack.

Margaret (Marg) Foran has discovered so much about herself since she was first diagnosed with cancer in 2005.

A natural communicator, who is at the same time outgoing and shy, Marg has unearthed a love of words and of writing. She's found comfort in the process of committing her thoughts to paper, using words to document her feelings, and to trace her changing attitude to life and to death.

Words have become a precious tool; they allow her to share ideas or news of what's happening in her world, and to prepare for what's to come.

Staff at Port Macquarie's Mid North Coast Cancer Institute (MNCCI) treasure Marg's heart-felt thank you notes, which leave them in no doubt about how much she values their support.

In 2016, Margaret joined a writing course being run by the Camden Haven Community College in Laurieton, and set about writing her life story and her eulogy.

She has agreed to share some of her stories, letters and musings via the "Our Stories" Project. Here is her first installment – a series of thoughts and responses to questions posed by "Our Stories" Project coordinator, Jan Dennis.

Margaret Foran – a Hard Nut to Crack

"Diagnosed with breast cancer in 2005, and secondary bone cancer in 2012, I had seven years in remission.

Treatment was chemotherapy for four months in 2014 and after that immunotherapy for the next three years, and ongoing.

Side effects included hair loss, lack of energy, uncertainty about life expectancy and having to have a treatment plan for the rest of my life.

Acceptance of this disease resulted in my decision to leave a good job and receive a life insurance payout through my super fund.

I don't feel hopeless about the cancer, and want to live as well, if not better than before.

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I've reconnected with life and have a better lifestyle and higher state of consciousness now, as I have become more appreciative of everything and everyone.

I believe increased hope improves the immune system, and that imagination joined to faith heals.

Coping with uncertainty has been helped by regular visits to a psychologist.

Having Kim [Port Macquarie Base Hospital's chaplain] to talk to about finding spiritual enlightenment through God has equipped me with a better outlook.

The hospital staff are very caring, and I have acknowledged them in a letter to the head of the Mid North Coast Cancer Institute (MNCCI).



Marg pictured at work at Coles, Port Macquarie.

I made promises to live well.

Doctors and nurses have triggered emotional responses that require growth and have taught me not to judge other people for their perceived weaknesses.

They inspire my soul and I hope to read other people's stories on the Hastings Cancer Trust website.

My thoughts and suggestions on things that might encourage other people affected by cancer include;

- *Make every day special and celebrate with extra special celebrations.*
- *Tell the family that you love them and record their stories too.*
- *Share memories with your partner, and remember that without trust there can be no love. I love my partner immensely, but she lives in Sydney.*
- *Encourage others to travel overseas and in Australia, and to make plans and talk about them.*
- *Find a way to feel useful - I am volunteering at National Parks and Wildlife Service as a Heritage Guide.*
- *Believe in medical miracles – don't have an expiry date on your life.*
- *Get a pet to give you unconditional love.*

- Kiss your sorrows goodbye and kick the person in the butt who is worrying you.
- Seek a clean bill of health, cancer-free.
- Learn something new – I am enjoying learning an instrument [guitar] and doing a writing course.

Looking back on my life, there have been some funny moments, including the time I cut the top of my thumb off when oyster farming, but it didn't stop me becoming a Massage Therapist for ten years.



Marg on the job as a National Park Ranger in the 1980s

When I did dog washing for a year, I was never bitten due to a little bit of good management and a lot of good luck.

I met another cancer sufferer named Gavin, and really enjoyed his generosity in handing out chocolates every treatment.

I love to swap corny jokes – I tell people I have a PHD (a post hole digger).

The positive outcomes of having cancer include that I have a better life now, because I am more appreciative, and share my ups and downs with others.

It's important to use credible and useful websites as a basis for decision-making. I've found the Cancer Council booklet "When cancer changes your financial plans" really helpful too; the section on page 25 outlines how to make a claim on your life insurance through your superannuation fund – not many people know about this.

My advice for other people considering sharing their stories is to articulate your emotions and not be frugal with words.

My hope is that the 'Our Stories' Project can encourage people to think about the most meaningful, interesting, amusing, triumphant, happy, ridiculous, unusual, uncomfortable, frightening and embarrassing times, and then help record them. The outcomes may be quite unexpected."

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Thank you for sharing Marg.

More about Marg

Marg Foran was born in Sydney in 1963, and grew up in Mona Vale.

She was the fourth of six children in the Foran family.

Marg lives in Laurieton on the NSW Mid North Coast and appreciates the peaceful river views from her home.

She has an astonishingly diverse employment history which includes time spent working on the family's vineyard in the Hunter Valley, and as a Ranger in the heritage-listed Warrumbungle National Park, near Coonabarabran in NSW.

Since then Marg has been self-employed as a Massage Therapist and a dog-washer, and worked as an oyster farmer.

More recently Marg enjoyed working at the Coles supermarket in Haywood Street, Port Macquarie, behind the cash register and in the fresh produce and deli sections.

Accessing the life insurance component of her superannuation has broadened her options in terms of the way she spends her time.



Marg Foran (far left) pictured in the 1960s with her siblings.

“Our Stories” Project – empowering people to share their stories.

To see read more stories, go to www.hastingscancertrust.org.au/our-stories

Contact: OurStoriesProject1@gmail.com



This story was submitted by Marg Foran, following time spent with “Our Stories” Project coordinator Jan Dennis in March and April 2017.

It forms part of the “Our Stories” Project, which is funded by a 2016 grant from the Hastings Cancer Trust.

The Hastings Cancer Trust is a local not-for-profit organisation that supports local cancer services via their annual grants program.

For more information go to www.hastingscancertrust.org.au.