

# SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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## **DALLAS COUPLE REMEMBERS CANCER PATIENT BY FUNDING NEW BREAST CANCER PROGRAM AT UT SOUTHWESTERN**

DALLAS - November 17, 1997 - A former Dallas middle school counselor is being remembered with a \$100,000 gift to UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas.

Carolyn and Tom Walker of Dallas have given the gift in memory of Mary Brown, a fellow Dallas resident with whom Mrs. Walker became acquainted through an unfortunate twist of fate — breast cancer.

The two met in 1984 in the waiting room of Dr. George Peters, a renowned UT Southwestern breast cancer surgeon who was treating them both. Mrs. Walker was immediately taken by Mrs. Brown's strong will and joy in life. She asked her to become a founding member of a support group she was starting for women with breast cancer that would match current patients with former patients who had similar diagnosis and treatment. Mrs. Walker knew Mrs. Brown would be invaluable in helping other African-American women in her community who were facing breast cancer. They soon became best friends. The Walkers even became unofficial godparents to Mrs. Brown's two oldest grandchildren.

The friendship was cut short in 1990 when Mrs. Brown died of breast cancer that had spread to her liver.

The Walkers' gift will go to the UT Southwestern Center for Breast Care, directed by Peters, professor of surgical oncology and holder of the Marilyn R. Corrigan Distinguished Chair in Breast Cancer Surgery. It will help fund a new initiative called the Mary L. Brown Breast Cancer Genetics and Risk Assessment Program.

The program, which became available to the public in October, will be a combination of risk analysis and genetics testing. The risk-analysis component will feature a computer program developed by Dr. David Euhus, assistant professor of surgery, to assess a woman's risk of developing breast cancer. Those deemed at high risk will be referred to Dr. Gail Tomlinson, director of the UT Southwestern Familial Cancer Registry and an assistant professor of

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pediatrics. The Walkers' gift will enable the program to hire a certified genetic counselor to help women understand the pros and cons of being tested and to provide follow-up counseling after being tested.

"Offering professional counseling is one of the most important things we can do for women who are facing breast cancer," Mrs. Walker said. "When we heard they were developing a genetics center at Southwestern, we wanted to do something to help."

Mrs. Walker is a writer with an interest in needlework. In 1987 she co-authored the book "The Embroidery of Madeira" published by Union Square Press. She was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1982 and credits her 15-year survival to the care she received from Peters. Tom Walker is chairman of the board of FYI Incorporated, a publicly held national document service company.

Mrs. Brown was a guidance counselor at the former Harry Stone Middle School in Oak Cliff. Shirley Isom-Newsom, who was principal of the school during Mrs. Brown's tenure there, remembers her as a "marvelous, marvelous person" who was totally devoted to her students.

"Even when her cancer was advanced, she came to school to see about her kids," she said. Mrs. Walker said Mrs. Brown also continued to support other women facing breast cancer after discovering that her own cancer had spread throughout her body.

"Of the hundreds of women who have come through our support-group program, no one made a mark like she did," Mrs. Walker said.

Peters said he also remembers Mrs. Brown as someone who had a positive influence on many people. "Mary showed all of us what courage really meant," said Peters, who keeps a picture of her looking over his shoulder in his office. He added that the new program is a fitting tribute to Mrs. Brown, who maintained a lifelong commitment to helping people learn.

The new program will give women in North Texas "one of the best genetics programs in the world right at their doorsteps. This is a prime example of incorporating basic science to benefit patients," Peters said.

Alicia Sanford, one of Mrs. Brown's grandchildren, said she is proud that the program at UT Southwestern is being named for her grandmother. "I'm very happy for her," she said. "She was a very hard-working woman."

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