



PROJECT KILIMANJARO: THE CLIMBERS

Pat Wente, Former Corporate Communications Executive

Pat is 57 years old and a long-time Houstonian. A graduate of the University of Houston, her professional career in marketing / communications spanned nearly 30 years, with increasingly responsible positions in major corporations and international accounting and consulting firms.

Pat is a self-described “exercise-hater” who attributes her lifelong dislike of physical activity to being too small to keep up with kids in her grade on the playground as well as her fascination with her older teen sisters’ poodle skirts, 45 records, and boyfriends. “I only liked ‘girl-things,’” she reports.

Nevertheless, Pat has worked out with Shana—off and on—for six years. She was making progress when, in 2007, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She is convinced that spending time in the gym helped her to get through the process of surgeries and chemotherapy successfully, to stay engaged enough in her job to keep working, and even to get a new position only a few months after chemo.

In 2009, Pat experienced a shock: she found herself unable to function successfully at work. She couldn’t remember names; couldn’t complete tasks; couldn’t manage time or projects—in short, she suddenly lost the skills that made her a valuable, top-level executive. She was fired from her job. Stunned and mortified, she went on a search for the cause of her mysterious ailment. In early 2010, she was diagnosed with “late-occurring cognitive impairment and brain damage as the result of chemotherapy drugs.” Pat is now disabled and coping with the disappointment of being unable to work at all in her field of expertise.

A lifetime of scoliosis has left Pat with a 90+ degree curve in her spine; accordingly, she has difficulties with balance and building core strength. Two of Pat’s physicians have advised her not to make the climb; however, she is very motivated by the other women. She works out with them as often as she can; she’s hopeful that she may be able to go. In the meantime, she’s making a Project Kilimanjaro quilt for the team as a memento.

