

Audra Outlaw

Van Driver
Changing Gears 2004



I was not one of those people who had cancer and then went out and had all of these fearless adventures. In fact, before I had cancer I went skydiving. I felt like I was pretty brave.

Cancer made me fearful.

All of a sudden, when faced with the fact that I could die, I became very cautious about things. I had built walls around my little world and was content living inside.

And then I had the opportunity to be a part of this trip. It would require me to come completely out of my little world for 10 days. I had a day to decide and 2 weeks to prepare.

I heard my father's fears ringing in my head. It was a dangerous drive on unfamiliar roads. I could get in an accident. The van could break down or get a flat tire and I could get killed trying to fix it. I could drive off the cliff. (That one was my favorite.) All with a new baby on the way that I wasn't supposed to have conceived in the first place.

But I did it anyway, and guess what? Turns out I'm a damn good driver!! I discovered my comfort zone was not so comfortable. With you all is where I belonged.

I was exposed to women who had fears and tough times just like I did, but damn it, they were getting on a Harley and facing much more danger than me. You are all the epitome of bravery.

Megan & Meredith took on a cause and an event that they felt passionate about and just did it! No looking back. It was their dream and they made it happen. That is brave. And the new riders. I can't say enough how brave it is what you did.

And the experienced riders who are either used to riding alone or with their own groups who came to unfamiliar territory with unfamiliar riders. That is brave. And the Aussie's! A different country, a different side of the road. Talk about brave!!!

That empty hole that I have is now filling and overflowing with what you all have given me. My husband says I am different since I've come back and he can't stop smiling about that. He thanks each of you from the bottom of his heart for the effect you've had on me. We're starting to plan a trip to my new favorite place – Australia.

I face each day now wanting to live, not just going through the motions. How do you thank 22 people for that?

Okay I know this is long, but I have one more thing to say. You are the craziest bunch of survivors I have ever been exposed to and it is SUCH a relief!!!!!! I am used to going to groups or events that seem to concentrate on the negative and there is lots of whining about what we've been through.

That was never me. I never fit into that. We all talked about our experiences but it always ended in a positive – or a boob flashing. HOW AWESOME IS THAT?! You all had a great sense of humor and made me laugh more than I had in a long time!!! I am ruined for any future breast cancer group or event and I love it. I am a warrior with an Amazon Heart and no one will ever take that away from me.