

Journey Back, Journey Forward project launched

Journey Back, Journey Forward, is a project spearheaded by the Robinson family after losing two family members in one year, both from breast cancer. The project will see a group of individuals embarking on a motorbike journey from Johannesburg, South Africa to Uganda in August 2011.



All the funds raised during the journey will be donated to another project called the Journey of Hope Breast Cancer Ride 2011, whose aim it is to raise awareness around the importance of early detection of breast cancer. A target to raise 1 Million Rand has been set.

When 19-year old Peter Robinson set off from Kilembe, Uganda to Johannesburg in 1954, on his BSA 65 Golden Flash motorcycle, he had no idea of the journey that lay ahead of him. A journey that would weave a story of bravery, endurance, love and heartbreak, a journey that would lead him ultimately to embark on another journey, 57 years later at the age of 76, back to Uganda on the back of a motorcycle and forward into a new beginning, a journey that has come to be known as the Journey Back, Journey Forward.

Not long after arriving in Johannesburg, after his gruelling motorbike ride from Uganda, Peter was introduced to a young lady named Dulcie.

Peter and Dulcie got married after a long engagement and started a family together. They had three children: a daughter Cheryl and two sons Wayne and Bryan. Peter built a career for himself in the mining industry while Dulcie took care of their growing family.

"Dulcie believed deeply in family and built ours to be incredibly close and strong," says Peter. Dulcie discovered a creative flair which she developed through art classes. She became chairperson of the Watercolour Society of South Africa (WSSA) and in later years became involved in teaching art to street kids in Hillbrow. Whilst the family was stationed in Welkom, Peter started the deepest wine cellar in the world in a mine shaft at the St Helena mine. Together Peter and Dulcie were a formidable team who brought an element of culture and esteem into the mining communities where they lived.

In 2007 the close knit family was devastated to discover that Cheryl had breast cancer. She received treatment and the cancer went into remission only to return again. During this time they received a second blow, Dulcie was diagnosed with breast cancer too. She too underwent treatment but tragically, in 2010, the Robinson family laid to rest both Cheryl and Dulcie, within months of each other.

"We'll never know for certain but I believe that both Cheryl and Dulcie suspected that something was wrong with them but did not act on it immediately. Cheryl was travelling a great deal with her daughter supporting her tennis career and may have put off visiting the doctor and Dulcie, who fell ill after Cheryl, may not have wanted to trouble the family with more worrying news. "We have learnt now that early detection of cancer is key to saving a person's life," says Peter

At the end of that year, while Peter and his son Wayne sat discussing the old days, they came upon the idea to travel back to Uganda retracing Peter's solo trip, again on motorcycles. But this time it would not be just Peter but his two sons Wayne and Bryan as well as Wayne's sons Jared and Bryce that would undertake the journey; three generations of Robinsons travelling together, along with a select group of family friends. "We decided that we would do this ride in honour of Dulcie and Cheryl," says Peter, "and that we would use the opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of early detection in the fight against breast cancer. We named our ride the Journey Back, Journey Forward; back to where I came from and forward to a new beginning," he explains.

On doing some further research they found out about the non-profit organisation The Journey of Hope Breast Cancer Ride who raise money for this very cause as well as ploughing funds back into the fight against breast cancer. Thus it was decided that all monies raised would be donated to Journey of Hope. "And we decided that if we are going to do this we were going to go big so we set a target to raise a million Rand!," explains Peter.

"We have been very touched by the story of the Robinson family and their Journey Back Journey Forward says Beverley Sterley, interim Director of Journey of Hope. "Their donation will play a big part in funding our cause," she explains.

The Robinsons will fund the entire trip themselves ensuring that every cent raised will go directly towards their cause.

The Robinson family have already captured the hearts of many with their story and their journey will be followed with great interest. Their progress will be documented on social networking sites Facebook and Twitter as well as on their blog <http://journeybackjourneyforward.blogspot.com> and on www.journeyofhope.co.za. They will travel through Botswana and Zambia into the Copper Belt, across to Lake Malawi, into Tanzania and Kilimanjaro, through the Serengeti and ferry crossing Lake Victoria, through Uganda and Mountains of the Moon, across Kenya and then head back to Johannesburg via Zimbabwe.

The family invite the public to share in this story of a family professing their love for two greatly missed members and making it their mission to spread the word so that other families may not lose their loved ones in the same way. The Journey Back Journey Forward will begin in Johannesburg on 5 August 2011.

Anyone wishing to make a donation towards this cause can do so on the Journey of Hope website - www.journeyofhope.co.za.