



# Nelida Pundyk Stascausky

SEP 11, 1939 - FEB 15, 2012



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# Nelida Pundyk Stascausky

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**N**elida Pundyk Stascausky September 11th, 1939 ' February 15th, 2012 Nelida Pundyk Stascausky, born on September 11th, 1939 in Buenos Aires, Argentina passed away at the age of 72 on February 15th, 2012 at her home in Portland, Oregon. Nelida (Neli) married Casimiro Arturo Stascausky (Art) on February 10th, 1966. Together they immigrated to the United States in 1967 in search of greater opportunities and a better life. They enjoyed 46 years of marriage. In 1970 Neli gave birth to their first child, son Gerard. Three years later, in 1973, she gave birth to their daughter Karen. Her dedication to family was extraordinary and her deep and meaningful friendships with her children were lifelong requiring the perfect balance of patience, tenderness and persistence along the way. Growing up in Argentina, Nelida did not have the opportunity to go to college. Gerard's and Karen's college graduations were among the happiest and most fulfilling days in her life. Between 1975 and 1990 Neli worked as a realtor. She was accomplished and well known for her energetic dedication to her clients and her creative ability to get unique deals done. In January 1994, Neli was diagnosed with Breast Cancer. With her family and friends rallied around her, Neli valiantly endured and addressed all of the hopes and fears that surrounded her cancer and its treatment. She was forever grateful for the hope and optimism that her loved ones provided her. Their support sustained her through the darkest of times, providing her with the resiliency she needed to battle cancer and move on to the rest of her life. Ultimately, Neli was diagnosed as cured, but she was always worried that the cancer would return and vowed to live each and every extra day of life she had been granted to the fullest. During her treatment, Neli was a part of a group of 10 Breast Cancer Survivors that sought solace and strength through writing. Led by writing instructor and breast cancer survivor Sharon Bray, they called themselves the "Scribbling Women of CBHP" (Community Breast Health Project), after a quote from Nathaniel Hawthorne, who once referred to women



writers of his day as the “damned mob of scribbling women” who distracted the world from his own work. Writing alongside these women was instrumental in Neli's own battle with cancer... an avenue for her to discover and express her deepest emotions and fears. Neli's works were featured in several publications, including: “A Healing Journey: Writing Together Through Breast Cancer” by Sharon Bray, Ed.D., 2004. In Neli's own words, here is what her experience in the writing group meant to her: “When we gather together to write, the exterior world disappears, and we all reach inside our inner selves. Depending on the weight we experience in the different facets of our lives, we manifest ourselves in wonderful voices: an outpouring of vibrant, multicolor art comes out, sadness and happiness, darkness and light, pain and relief, warmth and cold, rainbows and clouds, laughter and tears. And at the end of each evening we part, and driving home I glide: happy, fearless, ethereal and eternal? Perhaps...” -Neli Stascausky, published in 2004 in “A Healing Journey”, page 77, by Sharon Bray. It was at this point in her life that Neli found her true calling. Combining her experiences with cancer and her experiences as a Spanish speaking immigrant to the United States, she dedicated the rest of her life to helping others in need. Specifically, Neli began to help women who had cancer or who had just been diagnosed with cancer and who now found themselves grappling with the hopelessness and fear that she knew all too well. Most of the women that Neli helped were under forty and primarily Spanish speaking. These women were not only dealing with their new diagnosis, but also having to negotiate their care and treatment options in a language they didn't understand. She helped them find hope again and she helped them make incredibly challenging life decisions. Many of those in her care had husbands who would not accept their wives having a lumpectomy or mastectomy. The women found themselves choosing between saving their lives or the love of their husbands. Neli used her experience and compassion to convince these patients to save their lives through surgery and their marriages by educating their husbands about their cancer. In 1995, Neli and her friend Margit Reichner were among the first volunteers to offer their free services to the Gabriela Patser program. The Gabriela Patser Program, administered by what is today Breast Cancer Connections (BCC), provides funding for the screening and detection of breast



## Obituary

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cancer in women under 40 who are low-income and uninsured. Neli and Margit attended the clinics and doctor offices to facilitate the program's administration and to provide translation services for Spanish Speaking patients. They also provided transportation to patients without means to travel to the medical appointments. Neli was also instrumental in attracting other volunteers to the program. Helping others came naturally to Neli. She always knew how to get a smile, even from patients with the most bleak diagnosis and broken spirits. She was a joy and an inspiration to everyone who encountered her. In 2003, the recurrence of her cancer was detected. It was a terrible time for Neli, only made better by the immense outpouring of love and support from her friends and family. Shortly thereafter, she and Art moved to Portland, Oregon to be closer to son Gerard. She spent the last few years of her life enjoying every minute, thankful for each and every day, and cherishing her bountiful friendships. Neli was diagnosed with Frontotemporal Dementia in 2010. Although the dementia slowly stole her words, it never stole her spirit or the light in her eyes. Neli was vivacious and fun. Her laughter and spirit were infectious to all of those lucky enough to know her. She will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered. She is survived by her husband, Art; brother, Sergio Pundyk; son and daughter-in-law, Gerard and Sarah Stascausky; daughter and son-in-law, Karen and Jesse Alvarez; and four beautiful and spirited grandchildren, Zac and ZoÃ« Stascausky and AnaLucia and Sophia Alvarez. The family is hosting a service at eleven o'clock a.m. in the Chapel at Skylawn Funeral Home. A reception will be held immediately afterward in Skylawn's Vista Room. Skylawn Funeral Home and Memorial Park: Highway 92 at Skyline Boulevard. The family has asked that memorial donations be made to the Gabriela Patser Program (a 501 c 3 non-profit organization). To make a donation to the Gabriela Patser Program please make checks payable to Breast Cancer Connections. Please write "For the Patser Program. In memory of Neli Stascausky" on the check. Please send checks to: BREAST CANCER CONNECTIONS, 390 Cambridge Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94306



## Tribute Wall

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**Anonymous** posted:

I just saw Neli's obituary in the Breast Cancer Connections newsletter. I met Neli when she was a beloved community volunteer with that organization from 1995 onward. She made an enormous difference on the journey through breast cancer for hundreds of otherwise underserved women in need. She was always encouraging, supportive, and positive. She was one of these people who makes the world better just by her presence and peaceful way of being. I will never forget her.##imported-begin##Jeff Belkora##imported-end##

April 3 at 9:51 AM



## **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Nelida by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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