

The Story of the 3Day Traveling Couch

[Jody Rowekamp](#) lost her 4-year battle with breast cancer July 23rd at the age of 39. I had decided a couple of months ago to do the 3Day Walk in support of Jody - after she died, it became a walk in her memory. My sister Ruth had also signed up to walk in support of Jody and other friends with breast cancer.

The first day of the walk was exhilarating – seeing 3,000 women together for a cause like this was inspiring. I had a sense of what to expect for the walking part – what I didn't know about ahead of time was that people would collect along the route to offer their support. They would cheer, offer popsicles and candy and provide motivation to continue.

The morning of the second day of the walk, my sister and I were surprised by a group of supporters cheering us on (my husband, his siblings and their children - Jody's husband, Dave, is my husband's brother). With the group of people was a couch (which was in the process of being moved to my daughter's college apartment - Jody and Dave had given the couch to her). We thought it was great that the people were there, and the couch being there was kind of funny.



Much to our surprise, about 2 miles later we rounded a corner, and the people and the couch were there again. This happened 4 more times the second day of the walk - the people in the group changed, but the couch was a constant. After the second or third sighting of the couch, walkers began stopping to sit on the couch and have their picture taken. As we would round a corner and see the couch, I would hear other people exclaim "there's the Couch People!"

And sometime during the day, someone in the group of relatives realized that a very fitting thing was happening - Jody's couch was providing some relief to 3 Day walkers who were in need of a respite. And the Couch People were providing an emotional lift, too.

At the end of the day, I didn't expect to see the couch again, but on the morning of the third day we rounded a corner and there was my husband with the couch. He was on his own and needed to recruit walkers to help unload the couch from his van. He made another stop on his own, and then turned over couch duties to other relatives for a couple of hours.



Dave joined the group of Couch People again with his daughter Taylor (12) and son Ryan (8). And Dave and Taylor began to tell more walkers the story of the couch – about Jody and how the couch was hers. Taylor talked about Jody and told people how her Mom had been such a special and devoted mother. Dave talked about what a supportive wife Jody was, and how strong she was throughout her battle with cancer. And walkers responded with stories about their Moms, sisters, daughters and friends. It was a moving experience for everyone involved. One walker finished the walk, received her 3 Day shirt, and then gave it to Taylor.



Mike Rowekamp

The couch had a last stop at the state capitol, the site of the closing ceremony. Walkers who had stopped by the couch during the walk but had not heard the "Couch Story" until later stopped by again to offer support and thanks.

The Couch Story and the Couch People touched many people during those 3 days. And I was privileged to be one of them.

Terese Rowekamp, August 2006
trowekamp@gmail.com

Dave and Taylor Rowekamp



Ruth Meger

Sisters Walking Together

Terese Rowekamp

Together we collected over \$6,000 for breast cancer research and outreach.



Terese and Mike Rowekamp

3-Day Walk #2 2007

After that first walk in 2006, I decided to walk again in 2007. When I made that decision, my husband decided the couch needed to be there again as well. It made sense to form a walk team around the couch; thus, *The Couch People* team was born. With help from relatives, the couch moved around the 3-Day route and again provided both comic relief to walkers and emotional support to couch movers.

In 2007, our team had 5 walkers including myself.



The Couch People 2007

Micki Westrum, Tricia Liebert, Terese Rowekamp, Shawn Tuscano, Kim Seitz

Together our fund raising brought in more than \$13,000 for the cause.

I had no foot problems during this walk – not a single blister although my calves got pretty sore.

I also discovered that the experience of being part of the walk is addictive. It's rewarding to have survivors walking with you as well as providing encouragement along the way.

I signed up for the 2008 walk.

3-Day Walk #3 2008

Our team got a little smaller in 2008, down to Micki and myself. It's amazing how much you can learn about another person walking 60 miles with them!

Pit stops along the walk help make the time go by, providing trivia questions and other activities.

The couch was again removed from our daughter's place for the 3 days. This time we cleaned it before we returned it to her!

This year, we raised over \$8,500 between the two of us.



The Couch People 2008



We were fortunate to not have need of major assistance at the medical tent, although Micki got a number of blisters that led to a few stops for medical help on the way.

I made a mistake and got a pedicure the week before the walk. I knew enough to not let them trim my toenails too closely, but I didn't think about the fact that they would scrub off the tough skin on my heels that I needed for protection during the walk. The result was 1 blister on my heel that persuaded me to walk over 14 miles in a pair of rubber-bottomed flip-flops.

Lesson learned!

When I ended the 2008 walk, I was thinking that 3 times walking would be enough (my feet hurt a lot at the end of that walk!).

But, breast cancer is still taking lives and I have 1 mother, 3 daughters, 4 sisters, 6 sisters-in law, 6 nieces and many, many other relatives and friends whose lives could still be affected by breast cancer. I'd like that to not happen.

So, I signed up again for 2009.

3-Day Walk #4 2009

Micki and I walked again, and the couch was back, too.

To help pass the time along the way, people hand out stickers that walkers collect and put on our shirts or credentials or save for scrapbooks.

And each year the couch team tries to come up with a way for walkers to participate in the couch story themselves. One year we passed out pins with Jody's picture on them, another year we passed out cards.



This year we were very fortunate to have FASTSIGNS in Bloomington offer to print couch stickers for us. They were printed in 2 sizes, and were a big hit with walkers. Thanks so much, Sue and Wendy.



Once again it was a tiring but inspirational 3 Days.

When I get discouraged along the walk (it is a LONG walk), I think of all the people whose names are on my walk shirt. I've been wearing the same shirt each year, and on that shirt I've written the names of people I've been asked to remember, honor and support. When I'm tired of walking, I remember that they must have all been tired of treatment, and I keep going.

And signs like this provide some motivation as well.



The Couch People 2009

It was also a successful fundraising year.

Our team raised over \$9,000. I met my personal goal, which was to surpass \$20,000 total raised over my 4 walks.

I thank each and every one of my generous donors who support me each year, not only with money but more importantly with friendship and love.

An update on Jody's family – Jody's husband Dave remarried last summer. His new wife Linda was a family friend who could provide emotional support when Jody died – her husband had died a few years earlier from brain cancer. There are 8 in the new family – Jody's daughter and son (who are doing great) and Linda's 2 daughters and 2 sons. They are a true-life Brady Bunch and we are happy they found each other!

3-Day Walk #5 2010

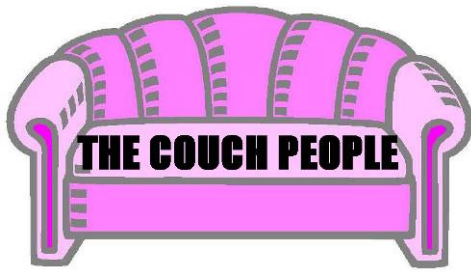
This year my oldest daughter Megan will join me on the walk. I am looking forward to it and will let you know how it goes!

In the 4 years I have walked so far, I have been fortunate to have many relatives, friends and colleagues who have supported me financially along the way. My personal total so far is more than \$21,000 raised for breast cancer research and outreach.

I'll continue to walk as long as I am physically able to do so. And each time I do, the couch will be back!



Terese Rowekamp, April 2010



We walk for your mother, your sister,
your daughter, your wife.

For you and me, my friend

WE WALK FOR LIFE!

Melissa Etheridge, paraphrased.