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A new life before dying

A FORT COLLINS
WOMAN MADE
CANCER A COMPANION
INSTEAD OF AN
ADVERSARY, REAPING
REWARDS FOR
HERSELF AND HER
PARTNER

By Joe Lewandowski
Special to The Denver Post

Fort Collins — Kris Rempfer was weak and unable to talk, but as her partner of 24 years approached for a morning embrace, a last surge of energy entered her body. She pulled Sally Juday close and smothered her face with kisses.

Juday simultaneously smiled and cried, gaining comfort in the emotional Eden that is home to a full range of human emotions — sadness and joy, fear and relief, pain and wonder.

Early the next morning, the couple's 11-month battle against cancer ended.

After colon cancer spread throughout her body, Rempfer decided not to wage a traditional fight with the disease. Instead she surrendered to the day-by-day journey leading to her own death, joining a growing number of people who refuse treatment and plan the details of their passing.

She offered all the love she could and accepted what was given to her. She became an unlikely teacher to friends and family about how to live, and how to die.

"Those last months were God's gift to me," says Juday, 56. "I've never had anything like that in my life. I saw a whole new side of her. Her death and dying was such a graceful, honorable process."

Flowing with the experiences of life was not always standard procedure for Rempfer. She was tenacious and hardworking, but she also was controlling, always believing she was right, and carrying a deep-seated anger. When she was diagnosed with cancer in May 2003, Rempfer, 56, realized it was futile to hold onto that part of herself. She dropped her rough edge and softened to the rhythms of life.

Late that same month, Rempfer experienced severe abdominal pain and was rushed into emergency surgery. Part of her colon was removed, and the cancer was discovered. Doctors said chemotherapy probably could hold the disease in check, but they ordered more tests.

The couple, shocked by the news, turned to their longtime therapist and confidante, Judy K. Underwood. She agreed to research information. What Underwood, 58, didn't know was that she would soon become a personal guide on Rempfer's end-of-life journey.

Initially, Underwood learned that the cancer was treatable. But when secondary test results were delivered, Underwood found no encouragement. The cancer had spread to Rempfer's liver, and Underwood learned that she probably would live only six more months — with or without treatment.

"The doctors recommended chemotherapy — they always do," Underwood says. "That's their job; they believe it gives patients hope. But Kris wanted to know the truth. I didn't hold anything back. I didn't try to influence her in any way."

Rempfer quickly decided she didn't want chemotherapy. She told Underwood: "I'm going to die a good death, and I want you to help me make it happen."

Neither quite understood what that meant. But Underwood examined her role and decided it would change significantly. "I thought, 'What would I want in this situation?' So I became a guide in the process; I became a coach," Underwood says.

Underwood researched end-of-life issues and found that most people naturally resist dealing with issues that portend death. She worked with Rempfer to develop an ongoing list of everything she wanted done. The list

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A TASTE OF FALL

FOUR FAMILIAR FACES ON THE DINING SCENE SAMPLE THE SEASON'S TRENDS



By Suzanne S. Brown
Denver Post Staff Writer

They are experts on Armani and Zegna, ah and zinfandel. Well-groomed and stylishly turned out, they are visions of urbane sophistication, from their pinstripes to their polished Gucci loafers.

They greet you with a smile, a menu and, you hope, a good table. The managers and maitre d's at some of Denver's most fashionable restaurants and parties are unmistakable style-setters. Dressing for dinner isn't what it used to be, and these men are more likely to sport trendy sportswear or Italian suits than the black tuxedos and bow ties that once were de rigueur in fine dining.

We asked four fashion plates to model fall styles and share some insider information on dining, here and on Page 7.

◀ **WILLIAM FOGLER**
34, creative director,
Associates by Sandy catering
1789 W. Warren Ave.

You'll see him working the room at parties, greeting guests, guiding waiters, slipping in and out of the food preparation area. It is Fogler's job to make sure an event is memorable, from the first meeting with clients to the day of the wedding at a private home or a gala benefit in a tent for 700 guests.

A Denver native, Fogler studied art history at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He managed an art gallery but soon found himself working with Sandy Tenenbaum, and has spent 12 years at the catering company. His role goes beyond menu planning to designing the entire affair, suggesting décor, florists and musicians. "I can do as much or as little as the clients want. I'm their resource," he says.

What's your style and how is it like the company's? "It's a bit eclectic because every day and every event is different. I don't want to come off like I'm trying to draw attention to myself, but sometimes events lend themselves to dressing up more. When we did a fundraiser fashion show for the homebuilder's association I wore a tailored denim Gucci jacket."

Favorite stores/designers: "My favorite place to shop is New York but if I shop in town, I'll go to Neiman Marcus, Andrisen Morton, Diesel, Express and Urban Outfitters. Skye is a new favorite. As for labels, Prada is at the top of the list."

Will tipping get you better service? "Money works in many ways. Sometimes when a client tips before the party, the staff gets really pumped up. As far as guests tipping, we try to keep it discreet at private events."

What do you wish guests would do? "It may sound clichéd, but I wish people would be more energetic at a party and not just sit there and then go home early. Someone has gone to a lot of trouble, so do your part and be a fun guest. No one likes a wallflower."

Favorite dish on the menu: "I like this item we just put on the menu that's an edible Asian sesame cracker in the shape of a spoon, topped with sushi-grade tuna mixed with wasabi and chives."

He is wearing: John Varvatos leather three-quarter jacket, \$1,095; Z Zegna flat-front awning striped pants; Ted Baker jaguard sport shirt with French cuffs, \$105; Robert Talbott belt, \$138, all from Andrisen Morton Men's.

Who's up front counts

MORE THAN
A GREETER,
A MAITRE D'
CAN DETERMINE
THE FATE OF A
RESTAURANT
— JUST ASK
THE EXPERTS

By Douglas Brown
Denver Post Staff Writer

"Corky," purns the bejeweled blond with the killer smile, pushing her lips to the cheek of Corbin

"Corky" Douglass III, owner and maitre d' of Tante Louise restaurant in Denver.

Douglass beams. She beams back. She introduces him to her dinner party, and he leads them to a table, grinning all the way, placing napkins on laps, taking drink orders.

It's a slow Thursday night in the restaurant, a warren of candlelit rooms in an old house on East Colfax Avenue. Douglass spends the evening gliding between tables, greeting guests, squeezing arms, hanging coats and chatting in his fluid basso.

His silver-and-gray hair sweeps up from his forehead and feathers off to the sides in the manner of George Hamilton. A handkerchief puffs from the pocket of his blue blazer. His nails shine from a manicure. His white dress shirt is buttoned to the neck, but no tie decorates his torso.

For more than 32 years, Douglass has spent his evenings floating

across the Persian rugs and wood floors of this, his study in Old World warmth. What he does, he says, is one of the foundations of his restaurant's longevity: He seduces guests with attention.

In this age of celebrity chefdom, much focus sits fixed on the people in the kitchen. But a big part of any restaurant experience hinges on everything but the food — the speed with which drinks are dispensed, the assistance with wines.

That constellation of "front of the house" responsibilities traditionally has been the bailiwick of the maitre d' (and the kitchen historically has been controlled by the executive chef).

But as high-end restaurants increasingly embrace variations on a theme of "casual," the notion of the maitre d' evolved.

"Now you have a brigade of people doing what used to be singly carried out by the maitre d'," says Cindy Weindling, executive vice president of the Colorado Restaurant Association.