

# The Pink Ribbon Mosaic Story

I hope this finds you and your family in good health and enjoying life. My connection to Breast Cancer is Sandy. She is a caring, loving, strong woman and the mother of our amazing daughter, Shaina. 2013 marks her 14-year as a survivor. I also lost an aunt to Breast Cancer. I am also surrounded by a large group of sisters, nieces, cousins and lifelong female friends – some of whom have also been impacted by Breast Cancer.

In the spring of 2008 I was approached by two wonderful humans, Lisa and Tia, from Bikers Battling Breast Cancer, Inc. (*BikersBattlingBreastCancer.org*), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, to donate something for their annual auction. Normally I would have just donated a coupon for a free portrait for them to auction off. This year would be different. Over the period of a few days, a series of seemingly unrelated events happened in my life and the Pink Ribbon Mosaic (PRM) was born. As with most things in life, the best are often unplanned; they occur through natural forces that intertwine and bind us all together. To some it is fate and to others, faith. I call it good juju.

I lived near a community of 2,200 homes and many of the families were clients of mine for family or other photo projects. They have a very active Breast Cancer support group. They hold an annual fundraising tennis event called *Volleyfest* to help raise funds for local Breast Cancer support organizations. I had volunteered to take pictures of the teams, the event itself and the award luncheon the next day.

Around this same time Shaina was graduating from college with her degree in Nursing. Sandy was coming up on 10 years cancer free. I needed presents for each of them. The day after the *Volleyfest* event, I was working on a project for a client's line of new hand crafted necklaces. At some point while taking product photos of her necklaces, in the model's cleavage, the idea for the Pink Ribbon Mosaic must have formed in the back of my head without me even realizing it. A few days later, I woke up around 3:00 a.m. when my subconscious light bulb went off!

Sandy...Shaina...*Volleyfest*...necklaces...cleavage...charity auction...Pink Ribbons. An image suddenly formed of thousands of pink ribbon necklaces in various cleavages all closely cropped and perfectly positioned to make one gigantic mosaic of a single Pink Ribbon. I saw it as a completed image in my head. There it was, a large dramatic canvas print that would be perfect for the upcoming auction. The idea that each story of those affected by Breast Cancer is unique, yet in many ways the same, seemed to me to be captured in the mosaic. To this day, I can close my eyes and still find myself at that moment of complete clarity.

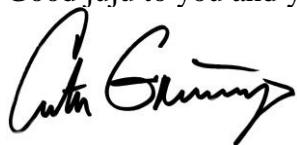
I called Lisa and Tia the next day to see if they approved of this somewhat tongue-in-cheek item for their auction. Not only did they approve, they encouraged me with their giggles and laughter at the very thought of the whole idea. I now had to get this image out of my head and onto a canvas. I did some quick math and figured I would need a database of roughly 8,000 pictures to complete the project! In less than 6 weeks – and with the help of over 70 of my amazing friends and family – the raw photographs were done. Special thanks goes to Ms. Becky for holding a poolside photo shoot and wine and cheese party where over 30 women volunteered their cleavage and sense of humor, allowing me to capture roughly half of the required pictures. That was one very long 8-hour day in June, and in the Atlanta heat, no less! The ladies had a great time, trying on various outfits and borrowing tops from each other. Lots of fun was had that day needless to say. The husbands of the volunteers, many of them personal friends of mine, noted that I must have 'suffered greatly' for my art. ;-)

A month later, following a few hundred man-hours of editing, cropping, fixing, failures and trials, the project was complete. When the shipping crate arrived and I saw the PRM for the first time, as a 40' x 60" canvas, it was rather emotional. I was holding in my hands what was once just an idea in my head. I replayed all the laughter, tears and memories of the effort we all had put into getting this project completed. The auction was a big success and the reaction to the first few hundred people that saw the finished canvas was simply amazing and, frankly, overwhelming. Due to popular demand, what you see before you is an 11"x14" individually hand-signed version that I created for mass distribution.

I do not sell these 11x14" prints – it just doesn't seem right somehow to me. If you feel like sending a donation to help my give-away efforts that would be truly wonderful. You are under no obligation to do so. You can be confident that any money received will go directly to buy more prints and pay for shipping and mailing costs. To date I have joyfully given away over 10,000 prints to help various groups raise money, awareness and hopefully bring a few smiles and giggles to people. If you would like more copies for yourself, a clinic or maybe your group has a fundraising event, please reach out to me via my email below. I'd be happy to send you some prints.

Lastly, I do enjoy getting emails with how, from whom, where you came in possession of your PRM with your thoughts on how it impacted you or others. Those emails bring things full circle for me as an artist. I also print out any emails I get and each year for Christmas my mom gets a copy of them. At 80+ she doesn't need anything more than to know she raised kids that are following her lifelong charitable habits. As some have asked, I also have a 22'x28" and larger canvas versions of the PRM that I do sell, at my cost plus shipping. A number of people have used these for office\clinic displays or for large auction items.

Good juju to you and your family,



Curtis Gruninger: Photographer / Dad / Brother / Uncle / Friend & Creator of The Pink Ribbon Mosaic ©2008

**Donations: Please send to the address below or use my email for PayPal & Chase QuickPay**

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'through charitable endeavors, good juju is spread'