

Newsday

OCT. 5-11

TV PLUS

ACTIVIST/
SURVIVOR

LORRAINE PACE

SHOWS DIRECTOR

LEE GRANT

A MAP TRACKING

THE INCIDENCE

OF BREAST CANCER

IN ONE

LONG ISLAND

NEIGHBORHOOD

DEDICATED
TO THE FIGHT

Everyone who has, or is, a mother, daughter, sister, wife, girlfriend or a female loved one of any kind, should watch *Say It, Fight It, Cure It* tonight at 8 on the Lifetime cable service.

Actress Lee Grant, who has concentrated on directing since the early '80s — winning an Oscar for 1987's "Down and Out in America" — has done it again with a highly emotive, yet rivetingly un sentimental documentary about breast cancer.

That isn't to say there aren't plenty of tears in *Say It, Fight It, Cure It*. Nor that you won't shed some yourself watching it. In fact, we dare you not to cry, at least once. But there's nothing sentimental about the message pounded home again and again by these women — and men — who are victims of this epidemic: to NOT be a victim.

As Mary Kay Sanders, a wife and mother and former Mrs. Minnesota International warned, "The only risk factor I had was that I'm a woman. If it can happen to me, it can happen to any woman. You have to be your own advocate."

Some of the women's stories are rather graphic for commercial television. Actress Oni Faida Lampley, who found a lump while breast-feeding her child, kept a video journal — from diagnosis to post-mastectomy recovery — including an on-camera comparison of her reconstructed breast with her normal one. She also videotaped having her headful of dreadlocks shaved off because she didn't want her kids to see her hair fall out after chemotherapy.

Perhaps most amazing, for its personal intrusion, is a conversation Grant records with the women of the Plamondon family — a mother with breast cancer and her four daughters in their '30s, two of whom also have the disease.

"What are you afraid of?" asks daughter Lee, her hairless head shining beneath a kitchen light.

"How much I'm going to miss you," her mother says.

"I think I'm going to go before you," Lee says, smiling and clutching her mother's hand. Lee died this year.

'Cure It': A Strong Dose Of Reality

By Steve Parks
STAFF WRITER



Lee Grant directs *'Say It, Fight It, Cure It.'*

But Long Islanders in particular will be most alarmed and moved by the story of Rosie O'Donnell and her mother. The celebrated comedian

and talk-show host gives the performance of her life, which, of course, is no performance at all, but a powerful testimony to her experience

with the disease that took her mother and struck 100 other women of her block in Corn-mack. Through a near-constant stream of tears, O'Donnell, remaining verbally composed and cogent — even heart-breakingly faint — describes how her mother, feeling she was too young at age 10 to attend her mother's funeral, left her home to play with her younger sister. Five years later, when she learned her mother had died, she describes the wonders coming to her house, cousins and bearing gifts of samples. She also tells how she has chosen to document her mother's life so that she will know that he was loved, and that we had a lot together while I was here.

There's also plenty of assistance by O'Donnell and others — including four-year breast-cancer-survivor Bella Abzug — that more needs to be done by our predominantly male legislators to find the environmental causes of this killer that appears to strike in geographic clusters. This point is driven home clearly with a map of one Long Island zip code indicating houses in which someone developed the disease. Our doctors — also predominantly male — need too to do more in the area of treatment, beyond "slashing, poisoning and burning," as one woman describes today's medical approach.

But there is room, too, in this 90-minute documentary for poignant moments with the men, including husbands and doctors, in these women's lives. Says Oni-Faida Lampley's doctor, "I'll be seeing her till one of us leaves this earth. So we're going to have a long relationship."

Then there's the husband in a support group for men with loved ones being treated for breast cancer: "We send the kids to bed and I do a little strip dance for her," he says of his wife. "I want her to know I didn't fall in love with her breasts."

Rosie O'Donnell, still wiping away tears, isn't being sentimental as she tells women to stand up for themselves. "Do it for your children or for your brother or sister or someone who loves you."

Amen.

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