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The sisters' pact that became the race for the cure

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The name Susan G. Komen is known because it has remained attached to the fundraising runs and public fight against breast cancer -- and because of her little sister, Nancy G. Brinker. The way Brinker tells it in her new memoir, "Promise Me: How a Sister's Love Launched the Global Movement," by the time her sister Susan Goodman Komen died of breast cancer in 1980, at age 36, she had promised to end the silence, to raise money for scientific research and to end breast cancer for good. We [review the book](#) in Thursday's paper:

In Brinker's telling, the seeds of her future were sown early by her determined, capable and endlessly generous mother, a lifelong volunteer who was "unfashionably fearless about questioning the judgments of God and doctors who think they're God's golf buddies." Growing up solidly middle class and Jewish in Peoria, Ill., the Goodman girls were baking cupcakes for polio charities in elementary school.

Brinker tells her story in two modes, chapters of lively family memoir alternating with vignettes on the history of the disease, the founding of her organization and the inspiration provided by survivors and researchers. She keeps her weight firmly (and wisely) on the former -- what could have been a sermon on cancer, philanthropy and cause-related marketing is instead a surprisingly diverting read.

The story of the efforts to end breast cancer isn't yet over. On Sunday there are two Komen race for the cure 5K runs in California: in [San Francisco](#) and in [Orange County](#).

-- Carolyn Kellogg

Photo: Breast cancer survivors raise pink roses at the 2009 Susan G. Komen Orange County Race for the Cure. Credit: Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times

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