

Life After Cancer - Good News Magazine

An Inspiring Story - by Bob Cox

"I was only 39 when I got it. They said I had it for 6 years. I had 2 types, the slow moving and the fast moving. I knew there was something wrong with me and if I had waited six months later it would have been all through my body. I knew there was something wrong, but I didn't know how bad it was."

What "it" was, was cancer. How bad it was for Nancy Matz nearly 11 years ago was bad. Her condition would require 3 surgeries. Nancy was told by her doctor that she had malignant breast cancer and her best hope for survival was immediate surgery. After losing her grandfather to cancer, she had a powerful fear of the disease. "I always associated cancer with death. The first things I thought about were 'I wonder how bad it is and how bad it's going to get.' Disbelief was probably the first thought. My second thought was 'I wonder how bad it's going to get.' I had it worse than they thought, so I was put back in the hospital for a second surgery. So, when they told me the second time I'd have to go back, that was a very frightening thing. At that time, I had gone through a lot of personal crises. I was taking care of my blind grandmother, and I had a child I was going through "tough love" with. So, I had a lot of personal traumas around me all the time and I didn't know how I was going to handle the family issues and the cancer. I didn't know how to do that," explained Nancy.

After the surgeries, Nancy had a long recovery period. She took the time to reflect back on her life and seriously examined the choices she made. She looked particularly close at the ones that were creating an inner conflict in her life, choices that perhaps were the cause of her dis-ease, including her 20 year marriage. I don't know if it's because we grew up together (we met at 15); but I knew we weren't happy in our marriage. When I got cancer, it was almost like God said, "If this is what you want, you can have this. If this is the only way you can change your life, you can have an out." I realized that I didn't want to die," recalled Nancy.

Nancy began her recovery by making some positive new choices. Her first choice was to embrace life after cancer. Next, she set out to resolve her long and unhappy marriage. "I couldn't see that we'd ever divorce. So, did I create this, maybe, I don't want to say for sure because I don't want people with babies who die of cancer feeling that the child created it, heavens no! But in my case, did I create it? I don't know if I didn't," explained Nancy.

"I was so unhappy. We were Catholic and we had a family. I just couldn't see any way of being happy. The cancer motivated me to realize that if I wanted a life, then it was up to me to do something about it. I saw that as a wake-up call, I call it the red brick effect. Like, how big of a brick do you need (to fall on you) to get the point! Well, I got the point that if I wanted to be happy; no one's going to do it for me. The cancer was a way of me saying, ok you can stay there and be miserable, or you can change everything. So I did and 6 months after cancer surgery I left him (her husband)," Nancy said.

The decision for Nancy to leave her husband of 21 years, plus her daughter (19) and son (15) and her home was a supreme test of faith. Faith in her belief that her creator wanted her to lead a life filled with passion, courage and integrity. Faith in not selling out to the fearful advice of well-intentioned friends by

staying put in the security of her home. "I walked away from him, the house and the kids. The 19 year-old was already out. The 15 year-old was heartache, but I had to do something," sighed Nancy.

Above all else, Nancy realized that her absolute first priority was to get well. She knew deep down that if she stayed stuck in her old way of living, that she'd have nothing of value to give to her family or others, except her life. "First off, I took all responsibility for me being unhappy. It wasn't him (her husband) who made me unhappy; it was me that made me unhappy. If you're unhappy in a relationship, you cannot put all the responsibility on your partner. It's your interpretation of the information given to you," stated Nancy.