



**LINDA H. BLASDEL**  
**CANCER SURVIVORS' SPEECH – OCTOBER 20, 2009**



**THANK YOU -- HAPPY TO BE HERE – AN UNDERSTATEMENT COMING FROM A CANCER SURVIVOR!**

**I AM REALY NOT A NATIVE TEXAN, AS THE INTRODUCTION INDICATED, I AM ACTUALLY A NATIVE OF NEW YORK CITY – YEAH SURE – WITH THIS SOUTHERN ACCENT AND BIG HAIR! SPEAKING OF BIG HAIR – SINCE I ACTUALLY HAVE NO HAIR AS A RESULT OF CHEMOTHERAPY – I SPENT MORE TIME SHOPPING FOR AN APPROPRIATE WIG TO WEAR TONIGHT THAN I SPENT ON MY SPEECH PREPARATION. BIG HAIR IS HARD TO FIND!**

**GLAD THERE IS SOME WINE – HELPS ME OVERCOME MY TIMID WAYS AND RELAXES MY INHIBITIONS!**

**ON A MORE SERIOUS NOTE -- THERE IS NOTHING SPECIAL THAT QUALIFIES ME TO STAND IN FRONT OF YOU HERE TONIGHT, OTHER THAN THE FACT THAT I AM – LIKE YOU – A CANCER SURVIVOR.**

**THAT, BY MY STANDARDS, IS A PRETTY POWERFUL QUALIFICATION, AND ONE I AM PROUD TO TALK ABOUT.**

**FROM THR DAY WE ARE DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER FORWARD, WE ARE CANCER SURVIVORS. CANCER IS NOT A DISEASE – IT IS NOT AN ENEMY – IT IS A TERRORIST!**

**AND, BEING DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER IS A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE . . . WHETHER ONE IS A STAY-AT-HOME MOM . . . A NORMAL WORKING PERSON OR AN ABNORMAL, FAST-TRACK BUSINESS PERSON, WHICH I AM!**

**THE CANCER SURVIVORSHIP ROAD IS OFTEN LONG, IT MAY HAVE MANY CURVES AND TURNS, AND WE MUST GO THROUGH TREATMENT TO CONTINUE OUR JOURNEY TO SURVIVAL.**

**AND, AS SURVIVORS, WE MUST ALWAYS REMEMBER THERE MAY BE MORE TREATMENT REQUIRED TO SURVIVE.**

**THE FINE DOCTORS SPEND PATIENT HOURS TO PREPARE US FOR OUR TREATMENT PROCESS, BUT THEY CAN NOT COVER IT ALL.**

**IT'S LIKE DR. JABBOURY SAID, "AS AN ONCOLOGIST, I CAN DEVELOP THE TREATMENT PROTOCOL AND CAREFULLY MONITOR TREATMENT PROGRESS, BUT I AM NOT A CANCER PATIENT . . . SO, THERE ARE SOME ELEMENTS I WILL FAIL TO CONVEY"**

**WHAT HE MEANT BY THAT, OF COURSE, IS THE DOCTOR CAN NEITHER PREDICT HOW OUR BODIES WILL PHYSICALLY ACCEPT THE TREATMENT NOR HOW OUR MINDS AND HEARTS WILL EMOTIONALLY ENDURE. ONLY WE, AS PATINETS, CAN CONTROL THAT.**

**WHICH BRINGS ME TO THE POINTS I HOPE TO MAKE TONIGHT AND, PERHAPS, LATER SHARE IN A ONE-ON-ONE WITH ANYONE INTERESTED IN HEARING MORE.**

**WHEN I WAS DIAGNOSED WITH BREAST CANCER AND HAD A BI-LATERAL MASTECTOMY, MY HUSBAND AND I WERE DEVESTATED. I HAD LONG EXPECTED THIS MIGHT BEFALL ME, AS CANCER IS A PROMINENT MEDICAL TRAIT IN MY FAMILY. BUT WHEN IT REALLY HITS HOME AND IS REALITY, NO ONE IS PREPARED.**

**THE NEWS EVOKES FEAR AND ANGER, TO NAME ONLY TWO OF THE EMOTIONS IT CALLS FORTH. YOU ARE FEARFUL OF THE UNKNOWN AND WHAT THE FUTURE MAY HOLD. YOU ARE ANGRY BECAUSE YOU WONDER – WHY ME? WHAT WILL I DO, HOW WILL I CARRY ON?**

**MY HUSAND AND I ARE INDEPENDENT BUSINESS PEOPLE AND, WITH THE HELP OF OUR OFFICE COORDINATOR, RELY EXTENSIVELY UPON ONE ANOTHER FOR ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT TO KEEP OUR BUSINESS RUNNING SUCCESSFULLY. THE THREE OF US ARE A TEAM, AND EACH HAS HIS OWN PLACE OF RESPONSIBILITY.**

**I WORRIED ABOUT SHIFTING MY ONE-THIRD RESPONSIBILITY TO THE OTHER TWO, AND THEY WORRIED ABOUT HOW THEY WOULD AND COULD TAKE ON THAT ONE-THIRD GAP I WAS LEAVING.**

**BUT – HERE WE ARE MORE THAN A YEAR LATER – AND THE BUSINESS IS STILL ALIVE AND WELL!**

**WE HAVE ENDURED FROM A BUSINESS STANDPOINT WITH A LOT OF COOPERATION AND TEAMMANSHP, BUT WE HAVE ACTUALLY SURVIVED IN TOTALITY BECAUSE OF THREE ELEMENTS:**

**SPA – SUPER POSITIVE ATTITUDE!**

**ATTITUDE IS THE BIGGEST PART OF WINNING ANY WAR – BECAUSE WITH A SUPER POSITIVE ATTITUDE, YOU TAKE IT ONE BATTLE AT A TIME. NO WAR WAS EVER WON, SITTING ON A PITY POT WHILE TRYING TO SHOOT THE ENEMY DOWN. YOU MUST STAND UP, REMAIN STEADY AND TAKE DEAD AIM AT THE TARGET.**

**REMEMBER, CANCER IS MORE THAN AN ENEMY – IT IS A TERRORIST! THEREFORE, IT REQUIRES FAR MORE POWERFUL AMMUNITION THAN AN ENEMY – THE AMMUNITION FOR ENDURING TREATMENT AND SURVIVING CANCER IS A SUPER POSITIVE ATTITUDE.**

**YOU MUST AWAKEN EACH MORNING AND GO TO BED EACH NIGHT TELLING YOURSELF THERE ARE MANY CONDITIONS WORSE THAN CANCER. AND, CANCER IS NO LONGER THE SIGNED DEATH CERTIFICATE IT ONCE WAS. TELL YOURSELF EVERYDAY, “I CAN BEAT THIS!”**

**WE ALL KNOW IT IS MUCH EASIER TO SMILE THAN TO FROWN, EASIER TO SIT THAN TO STAND, EASIER TO WALK THAN TO RUN. IT IS ALSO EASIER TO HAVE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE THAN FOSTER A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE. IT DOESN'T REQUIRE NEARLY AS MUCH EFFORT. SIMPLE – JUST BE THANKFUL FOR EARLY DETECTION, MIRACULOUS TREATMENT AND KNOW – WHILE THE END OF THE DISCOMFORT CAUSED BY TREATMENT AND THE ROAD TO REMISSION MAY NOT BE**

**IN SHORT-TERM SIGHT – IT IS ATTAINABLE WITH FAR LESS GRIEF IF YOU JUST MAINTAIN A SUPER POSITIVE ATTITUDE.**

**MAKE IT HABIT OF SMILING WHEN YOU WALK IN THE DOOR OF THE CLINIC, MAKE IT A HABIT OF VISITING WITH THE OTHER PATIENTS, MAKE IT A HABIT OF LETTING YOUR DOCTOR AND MEDICAL ATTENDANTS KNOW HOW MUCH YOU APPRECIATE THEM. HAPPINESS IS CONTAGIOUS, AND YOU CAN EITHER SPREAD HAPPINESS, OR YOU CAN SPREAD GLOOM.**

**LEARN TO LAUGH AT YOURSELF AND THE EXTINUATING CIRCUMSTANCES OF CANCER TREATMENT.**

**ONE DAY I WAS DRIVING DOWN THE STREET AND – WITHOUT TAKING MY EYES OFF THE ROAD – TRIED TO RETRIEVE A KLEENEX FROM MY PURSE. . . WELL, WHILE FEELING AROUND IN MY PURSE FOR THE KLEENEX, I FELT MY SMALL, TRAVEL-SIZE CAN OF HAIR SPRAY . . . I LAUGHED AND THOUGHT – WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT STILL IN YOUR PURSE – YOU DON'T HAVE ANY HAIR TO SPRAY!**

**ANOTHER EXERCISE IN THE EMOTIONAL PROCESS OF CANCER TREATMENT AND SURVIVORSHIP IS CRY! – NOT CRY IN THE LITERAL SENSE OF THE WORD, ALTHOUGH THAT IS PERFECTLY NORMAL BEHAVIOR, BUT CRY IN THE ABSTRACT SENSE OF THE WORD.**

AS MUCH REST AS ONE CAN GET, AS MUCH STRESS AS ONE CAN ELIMINATE AND AS MUCH RESPONSIBILITY AS ONE CAN PUT OFF ON SOMEONE ELSE ARE KEY ELEMENTS IN THE SURVIVAL PROCESS.

THEREFORE, WE MUST LEARN TO CRY:

CHILL – GET AS MUCH PHYSICAL AND MENTAL REST AS POSSIBLE, REMEMBERING ROME WASN'T BUILT IN A DAY. LEARN TO PRIORITIZE AND SEPARATE WHAT HAS TO BE DONE TODAY FROM WHAT CAN WAIT UNTIL TOMORROW.

RELAX – DON'T CLUTTER YOUR MIND AND STRESS YOURSELF WITH CONCERN OVER ISSUES YOU CANNOT CHANGE. ACCEPT YOU CANNOT VOLUNTEER FOR AND HEAD UP EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD OR COMMUNITY PROJECT. LEARN TO BE SELFISH AND PLACE EMPHASIS ON YOURSELF AND YOUR HEALTH MAINTENANCE, RATHER THAN ON WHAT YOU ARE NOT DOING

YIELD – LEARN TO LET SOMEONE ELSE BE STRONG. ACCEPT THE FACT THAT THE HOUSE IS NOT AS CLEAN AS YOU WOULD LIKE IT TO BE OR THAT THE YARD IS NOT MOWED AS NEATLY AS YOU WOULD MOW IT, ACCEPT THAT YOUR KIDS ARE GOING TO TRASH THEIR ROOMS, ACCEPT THAT YOUR SPOUSE IS NOT GOING TO DO ANYTHING AS WELL AS YOU DO IT! FORGET IT! TAKE THE ATTITUDE THAT SOMEONE ELSE IS DOING A 100% BETTER JOB THAN YOU – BECAUSE YOU ARE GOING TO DO AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE AS MUCH OF THE TIME AS YOU CAN.

**FINALLY, BELIEVE IN POP – NOT DEAR OLD DAD – BUT THE  
POWER OF PRAYER: BEGIN AND END EACH DAY BY GIVING THANKS  
TO THE DIVINE BEING IN YOUR LIFE FOR THE MANY BLESSINGS YOU  
HAVE RECEIVED.**

**PRAY FOR YOUR CONTINUED STRENGTH AND FOR YOUR DOCTORS  
AND CAREGIVERS.**

**AND, LASTLY, ALWAYS ASK YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO PRAY FOR  
YOU. PRAYER IS A POWERFUL TOOL IN THE PHYSICAL AND  
EMOTIONAL HEALING AND MAINTENANCE PROCESS.**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME HERE TONIGHT. I HOPE I HAVE MADE  
JUST ONE COMMENT YOU WILL TAKE AWAY FROM HERE AND BUILD  
UPON TO CONTINUE YOUR LIFE AS A CANCER SURVIVOR AND  
AMBASSADOR FOR THE RESEARCH AND EARLY DETECTION OF THIS  
TERRORIST WE KNOW AS CANCER.**

**GOD BLESS EACH OF YOU . . . THANK YOU!**