

# ***This Can't be True!*** *...they've made a serious mistake...*

*...from the voices of experience - what you need to know...*

*by Kat Rowoldt*



**Debbie Olive**



**Linda Binns**



**Chloe Hill**



**Jeanne Byars**



**Amy Watkins**



**Kat Rowoldt**

How do you begin to tell a story with so many tears, laughter, "I did it!", mixed with the fears, head games, struggles, and inconveniences as this one does? This was such a powerful experience for me to talk personally with each of these beautiful women about their experience, some even in the midst of their

journey. Six local women, myself included, were all diagnosed with breast cancer. Five survived, one did not.

You don't give a lot of thought to things that don't seem to impact your life. Breast cancer had never been a part of my life or my family's history. We had never been touched by this disease. Now, if we were talking lung, bone, brain, bladder, or skin cancer - bingo! - I know a little about these.

I am so thankful I have been faithful for the last twenty years, since the age of forty, to go annually for my mammograms. It's just something you do, you hate it, but you get it over with, and move on. A couple of times I have been called back to do a few more images, but they always turned out to be calcium deposits or cysts - no big deal.

This year I received my annual reminder to schedule my appointment and I did. March 20th, I zipped right in and had my annual YUCK appointment and got back to work. The next day I was called, they wanted more pictures again. No big deal, let's get it over. Thursday, March 23rd, I popped back in there to do my "do-overs."

This time something was different. We kept doing images, and more images, until finally I asked if I was setting a record. When the tech responded, "probably!" I began wondering what the heck was going on. Before I left, I was led to an office where Dr. Snuggs was seated with my images before her. She pointed to the area of concern and recommended I have it biopsied.

The cause for the numerous images was the fact what they were trying to see was so deep. Basically, it was near the rib cage, and it was so small. If it had not been for the 3D imaging machine they had just recently received, they probably would not have seen it.

We scheduled my biopsy for the end of the following week, March 31st. I would get the results the following Tuesday, April 4th. John, my husband, and I were so sure I did not have breast cancer, even after having a discussion about it, we decided he just needed to go to work and I'd stop by the Imaging Center for the results, no big deal.

Wrong! It was a big deal. This radiologist, who was filling in for Dr. Snuggs who was on vacation, was trying to tell me I had breast cancer, I was so lucky to have caught it so early, and was scheduling appointments for me to see surgeons, oncologists, etc. STOP!!! "This can't be true! You've made a mistake!" was what my mind was yelling inside my head as I listened to the words he was saying.

I texted John to no avail. He wasn't listening for any text notifications because he too knew I was just fine. I finally had to call his phone to get his attention. "Shock!"

You leave the appointment with a folder which includes a large book with more information on breast cancer than you'd ever want to know, multiple appointment cards, and an assurance everything would be okay. Really?

I kept thinking about their words, telling me I was lucky! How can I be lucky when I was just diagnosed with breast cancer? I would soon begin to understand very quickly. I consider it blessed - versus lucky though.

I'll spare you all my details, that's for another article and time. I had a lumpectomy (as we prefer to call it - versus what medically they call a partial mastectomy) on April 20th, met my oncologist the following week, then my radiologist a few weeks later, and started radiation treatments on June 1st. This week, I complete my prescribed sixteen treatments and will be declared cancer free on Thursday, June 22nd.

My diagnosis was infiltrating ductal carcinoma, stage 1, 1.5 mm in size. It was so small it could not be seen or felt. They had to find it with a wire that was inserted through my breast, prior to surgery, which led to the marker that was left in place from my biopsy. Wow! There is a strong likelihood mine was caused by thirty-five years of being on hormone supplements since my complete hysterectomy - bi-lateral oophorectomy at the age of 25. My oncologist told me last Friday, if I follow through as planned, add 30 minutes of exercise to my daily routine which would raise the oxygen level in my body, I will probably never see another day of cancer in my life.

Through my journey, several dear friends were on my heart who had walked this walk before me. I kept thinking of **Jeanne Byars** - how I miss her. She died from breast cancer in 2015, but what a fighter.

Jeanne discovered she had breast cancer in a most unusual way. She was in a car wreck. After the wreck she began noticing bruising where the seat belt must have grabbed her and she was getting really sore. While visiting her chiropractor, she mentioned the situation. Her chiropractor asked if she could take a peek. Immediately she knew something was very wrong. She told Jeanne to go directly to the doctor/hospital, don't even go home first.

Jeanne was diagnosed with breast cancer that had already spread through her body, stage 4. It was in her lymph nodes, spine, skull, and bones. That was January 2012. She was busy caring for her elderly parents and had not gone in for her mammograms in three and a half years. She, like all of us, was very busy. Who has time?

Precious Jeanne never told us, her prayer partners, her full diagnosis. We simply knew she had breast cancer and it showed up in her lymph nodes. She knew she had a fight on her hands, but she was going to win. Due to the advanced stages of her cancer, which we were unaware of, the doctors tried several experimental drugs on her - one after another. Through it all, she smiled, acted healed because she believed she would be victorious. She didn't want anyone to know the gravity of her situation.

Cindy Hale, Jeanne's daughter, validated the story with me and shared the full diagnosis of what Jeanne had been dealing with through her battle. In June of 2015, the cancer had invaded her liver and soft tissues. The doctor informed her it was time to get her affairs in order. She still believed the good Lord was going to heal her on this side of eternity.

I believe it was Labor Day weekend that year, when I last visited with Jeanne. It was one of those tough conversations where you know it is the last time. Jeanne still smiling the smile that only she had and encouraging and caring for everyone else around her, got herself spruced up for my visit.

She was concerned about her husband and how he was going to need someone to care for him because of his diabetes. Jeanne shared how she had talked with him and encouraged him to find someone soon who would take care of him. She also told me she had encouraged her daughter to go through the house and get whatever she wanted as soon as possible after she died. If her daddy did remarry, the new woman might not want her things.

What a powerful love and care for those who she was leaving behind. Planting seeds, Jeanne gave them direction in the way she wanted them to go when she was gone. Wow! I cried for miles in the car as I shared with my husband what Jeanne had shared with me. My precious friend - her loving smile - kept me strong through my journey. Jeanne died three weeks after that visit.

In visiting with Cindy about her mother, I asked her if she was current on her mammograms. She said, "no." She had been scared to go, fearful of getting the same diagnosis. She informed me that just recently she had made an appointment to finally get it done. It is scheduled for July 10th. I told her I was calling her on the 11th to be sure she went.

I can appreciate her fear, but what I want to convey in this article is that **CANCER SHOULD ONLY BE AN INCONVENIENCE ON OUR SCHEDULE, NOT A LIFE ALTERING REALITY.** If Jeanne had kept her mammograms current, she might still be here today. There's a really good chance that would be true. I know Jeanne would want me to keep up with Cindy and make sure she takes good care of herself - and I will do that for my precious friend in heaven.

My thoughts also went to **Debbie Olive** who was diagnosed in 2001 at the age of 47. Debbie discovered a lump on the side of her breast under her armpit. Debbie did have a history of breast cancer in her family. Her aunt died at the age of thirty six from it. Debbie had a mammogram, followed by a biopsy. It was cancer, stage 2, estrogen positive.

Debbie chose a different path for treatment because of the experiences her aunt had with traditional medicine, opting instead for the holistic alternative, naturopathy. She traveled to Acuna, Mexico for oncotox treatments, ozone treatments, and mega vitamin C intravenously. These treatments shrunk the tumor and eventually she had a lumpectomy to remove the balance of it. She did not do chemo or radiation, but completely changed her diet for three years to vegan and juicing.

She kept/keeps God's healing scriptures before her, guarded her words both then and now, and continues to do annual mammograms. The number one thing she would like to tell everyone reading this article, "Do self exams. Pay attention to your body. If it's sore or hurts, get it checked."

Good advice, Debbie.

As I was beginning my journey, a friend of mine in the Republican Party was just completing her year long journey through it. **Linda Binns** was age 53 when she discovered hers. She felt like she had pulled a muscle up high on her chest, just beneath her collarbone. She was doing a family reunion and had one more family reunion to go before she would slow down enough to figure out why this lump wasn't going away.

The location of hers would not be picked up on a mammogram, though she does get her annual mammograms. Most women do not realize our breast tissue literally runs up to our collarbone and completely under our armpits to the back. A good massage therapist who works the pectoral muscles can tell the difference between lumps versus knots for their clients.

They did a sonogram on Linda, then a biopsy. An MRI showed it was the size of a half dollar, 3.6 cm which equals 1.5 inches. Next it was a bone scan, liver scan, lung scan on her - all clear! The biopsy showed the tumor was stage 2.

The doctors needed to shrink the tumor first because of its size. They started her on A & C chemo through an IV which took four hours to complete each time. She lost her hair after the 2nd treatment. (You noticed she was kind enough to let me photo her with her new hair growth which is just returning.) This was a weekly treatment and she had to fight nausea and feeling "weird." It

was a very tiring experience for her. The follow up MRI showed the tumor had shrunk to the size of a nickel.

Her second round of chemo was weekly for twelve weeks. After five months of chemo, the tumor was finally the size of a dime, 1.5 cm. It was time for her lumpectomy. Her surgeon removed some muscle, 3 lymph nodes - and all was clear. A month of healing, then she began her radiation treatments. The average dosage is 33, and that's what she received.

Breast cancer does run through her family. Her sister and aunt both have had breast cancer. Linda advises ladies to get their mammograms annually, don't wait. Like Debbie Olive, if you feel something strange, have it checked out.

Another dear friend, **Chloe Hill**, had breast cancer a few years back. She was 65 when she was diagnosed. There is a history of breast cancer in her family. Her grandmother was diagnosed at 57 and died from it. Medicine has advanced so much from the days when her grandmother was diagnosed.

Chloe's was discovered through a mammogram. It too was very deep. The doctor informed her that tumors so very deep like hers, are usually not found until they are stage 4. Hearing that information, Chloe reports she began praising the Lord that it was found early, brought to light, and thanking Him for His protection over her. Like me, she had a lumpectomy and radiation. Early detection is the key - and that occurs when you are faithful in booking those appointments.

Chloe advises women to 1) know the Lord, trust Him, 2) be aware of your body, and 3) get your annual checkups. Always keep your eyes on the Lord - and don't look back.

One final story - one that is so dear to my heart - and forever will be! I never dreamed it would come to its full fruition this day, June 17, 2017. I must share this unique and special story.

The youngest amongst this group of six women is **Amy Watkins**. She was diagnosed in 2007 at the age of 35. In April of that year, Dr. Dunham had recommended that she should go ahead and start her annual mammograms since her mother, Debbie Olive, had been diagnosed with breast cancer. He wrote up the order, but it was up to Amy to make the appointment. Six months later, she had not made that appointment. Like I've said, "we're busy women!"

Listening to the radio, Amy heard there was going to be a drawing to win \$250.00 shopping spree at Sunset Mall if you booked your mammogram during that month. She thought - double win! I get the mammo done and possibly could win a shopping spree. Thank God for the radio ad. Amy was diagnosed

with breast cancer. She won her LIFE, even better than a \$250.00 shopping spree.

Her right breast had two tumors which measured together as 6 centimeters. The tumors could not be felt, they also were too deep. As she and her husband sat there and listened to the diagnosis, her husband cried and Amy got tough! She became a fighter, 'like putting on boxing gloves' she describes it, determined to win, and knew immediately that she wanted a bi-lateral mastectomy done. There was no hesitation on her part. There was a KNOWING that this was what she was to do.

At church the following Sunday, I learned of her diagnosis. I remember during the service, maybe it was during Praise and Worship, God putting a question on my heart. He was asking if I would be willing to pray for Amy every day through this journey of hers. God had never asked something like that of me, but I knew it was really real, and He was serious. I wasn't sure if I was up to the task and really wanted to say no because I thought I would fail on His assignment. By the end of the service, I knew I had to accept this assignment and told God yes. I found Amy after the service and told her God had asked me to pray for her daily and I would.

Every Sunday I updated her on my prayers for her, what I felt God was saying, even a prophetic vision God had given me of Amy with her granddaughter one day. I still remember it today. It was assurance she was going to live and see her grandchildren many decades in the future.

Knowing you have cancer plays with your head. I can't put it in words, neither could Amy. Thoughts are constantly bombarding you and it's a fight to stay strong in faith and positive. Amy reported that she went through a time of having thoughts about her funeral. Who would come? Who would be there? She struggled to push those thoughts out and return to thoughts filled with faith and victory.

She too had no pain leading into this diagnosis. The way they did biopsies a decade ago was painful. I can relate to that experience, because the same process was used on me to run a wire through my breast so the surgeon would know where the little "dude" was in my breast. It is the worst experience. Today biopsies are done like they do mammograms and it's less traumatic.

Amy went to Scott & White to have her double mastectomy done. She was off work for six weeks as she recovered. After the surgery, Amy had chemo, six treatments, 3 weeks apart. Next was radiation, 33 treatments.

Being a young woman, Amy elected to have reconstructive surgery. When she had the mastectomy, stretchers were placed (tissue expanders) to prepare her

skin and body for the future surgery. When she would go for chemo, she would also receive an injection of 100 cc of fluid into the stretchers to force the expansion where her future breast implants would go.

Somewhere in the midst of this journey for Amy, I had an unusual experience happen. After months of praying, I realized I had missed a few days and felt really grieved about it. I remember going out on the front porch to pray for her, trying to beat myself up over having missed those days. God hushed me up. He reminded me that He was the one who brought Amy to mind each day when I needed to pray for her. It was at all hours, based on when He would prompt me. He said I didn't need to pray for her any longer, IT WAS DONE. She was healed. Wow!!!!

The following Sunday after service I caught her to tell her the news. Donnie, her husband, was standing there with her. When I shared what God had told me, Donnie lit up. He too had heard God say the same thing. Powerful confirmation.

After the radiation was completed, the implants were done in 2008. She was on Tamoxifen for one year, then had her ovaries removed to get any remaining estrogen out of her body. She took Arimidex, an estrogen blocker for a season after that.

Amy was the last of the ladies for me to reach to do this story. We set a breakfast date to catch up on life and for me to get the details of her story for this article. We were both pretty excited to get together and see one another. It had been way too long.

As I was hanging up my pj's to get into the shower that morning, in the flash of a moment, God spoke to my heart again and brought me to tears. He reminded me of the prayers I had prayed for Amy and said: The prayers I had prayed for Amy in her battle against cancer were seed for me. Those prayers were seed sown in which I reaped the harvest in my own life. This is why my cancer was caught early and was a very simple procedure.

This Word rang through me. I had never heard such a thing before. I understand seed time and harvest - but this was new. This was different because God had specifically asked me to pray for Amy. He knew what was in my future. My obedience paid a huge dividend.

When I was diagnosed, Amy was one of the first people I reached out to for prayer. I received no response from the text I sent her. Little did I know that she was dealing with her father who was dying at the time and caring for her father-in-law who is moving into one of the later stages of Alzheimer's.



I wasn't sure if I would share what God had said that morning with Amy or not at breakfast. I typed it up in my phone so I wouldn't forget and then told John, my husband, what had just occurred. When Amy arrived at Armenta's, we hugged and sat down. Before anything else was said, Amy had something to share with me.

She began telling me how she wanted to pray as faithfully for me as I had done for her. She talked about how much it meant to her to know that I was praying daily, sometimes for an hour, just for her. She was struggling because she wasn't being able to when God spoke to her. God told her because of the prayers I had prayed for her, my experience with cancer was going to be breeze.

I grabbed my phone, opened it to where I had jotted down what God had just told me that morning and showed her what was written there. She looked at me and said, "exactly!" What a faith building experience God-things like this can be. I never dreamed I was sowing seeds with my prayers and that I would reap the harvest. God is so good.

Amy had a special saying that she wanted to share for this article:  
**"Don't wait for the storm to pass, learn to dance in the rain. Life is worth living, even in the storm."**

She concurs that a mammogram is a must - it saved her life. She went on further to say that her mother's cancer also saved her life. If her mom hadn't been diagnosed when she was, then Amy's doctor wouldn't have sent her to get a mammogram at age 35. She would have been dead by 40. Mothers, consider this fact in regard to your daughters.

She also wanted to encourage people not to tell cancer patients stories of their relatives or friends who had cancer and died. That's not what we need to hear. Talk life!

Today - we need to change the image and concept of breast cancer. It's not your mamma's medical world any longer. **The fear should not be of being diagnosed with breast cancer, it should be NOT being diagnosed with breast cancer EARLY.** Early is the key.

Cancer should be an inconvenience in our schedule, not a life altering diagnosis.

**Women** - ask your friends and family if they have had their mammograms.  
**Husbands** - ask your wives if they are current.

Let's realize that with today's medicine, we don't have to have the nightmares of yesterday unless we procrastinate and let it develop undetected in our

bodies. The choice is ours. I'm so blessed to have found mine when I did. That "dude" had just escaped it's little shell and was about to spread - but PRAISE THE LORD - he didn't get a chance. God is FAITHFUL.

Thank you to all the ladies for sharing their journeys in this article. If only one woman takes action and schedules her mammogram and has her life saved, then all the work which went into this was so worth it. I hope it's one of your loved ones who schedules their appointment today.

Until next time...

*Kat Rowoldt*

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