

## STEVE'S SURVIVING & THRIVING STORY

### PART 1

**If you think breast cancer is exclusively a woman's disease—think again. My name is Steve and I am a breast cancer survivor and thriver now into MY 5TH year of thriverhood. I'd like to tell you about my journey and some of the things I've learned along the way.**

**AS I BEGIN MY STORY I WANT TO HONOR THOSE OF US THAT ARE SURVIVORS AND THRIVERS FOR OUR STRENGTH AS WE CONTINUE OUR BATTLES WITH CANCER. I WANT TO HONOR THE MEMORIES OF OUR SISTERS AND BROTHERS WHO ARE NOT WITH US IN BODY BUT ARE WITH US IN SPIRIT BECAUSE OF CANCER.**

**My journey began fall of 2007. I was having surgery for an inguinal hernia—common for men and women. The pre-op physical included a chest x-ray. X-ray showed something suspicious—possible malignancy (Lung Cancer is what they suspected), CT scan recommended. The CT was inconclusive. A PET scan recommended.**

**THE PET SCAN INDICATED LUNG NODULE IS NOT MALIGNANT BUT "1.7CM NODULE WAS SUSPICIOUS FOR BREAST CARCINOMA IN A MALE AND HISTOLOGIC EVALUATION IS RECOMMENDED TO EXCLUDE INCIDENTAL MALE BREAST CANCER. "THAT GOT MY ATTENTION."**

**THANKSGIVING WEEK I HAD AN ULTRASOUND NEEDLE BIOPSY. WHEN I WENT IN FOR MY APPOINTMENT, I WAS TOLD I WAS ALSO GOING TO HAVE A MAMMOGRAM. A MAMMOGRAM—I WENT TO ANOTHER ROOM TO HAVE THE MAMMOGRAM. I COULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT WAS HAPPENING. BUT IT HAPPENED. I DON'T KNOW HOW, BUT IT DID. MEN WHEN YOUR WIFE COMES HOME AND TELLS YOU SHE'S HAD A MAMMOGRAM—YOU TAKE HER TO DINNER! THIS WAS LIKE A SURREAL EXPERIENCE. BUT IT ALSO MADE ME THINK THAT THEY REALLY SUSPECT SOMETHING.**

**A FEW DAYS LATER—SATURDAY AFTER THANKSGIVING, I GOT THAT PHONE CALL THAT YOU NEVER FORGET. THE SURGEON SAID—*STEVE YOUR TESTS ARE BACK AND I'M SORRY TO TELL YOU THAT YOU HAVE BREAST CANCER!!***

***CANCER!! BREAST CANCER!! I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THAT MEN GOT BREAST CANCER. BUT WE DO—2000 MEN A YEAR COMPARED TO OVER 200,000 WOMEN. IT'S ABOUT 1% THE RATE. BUT IF YOU ARE THE GUY IT'S 100%.***

**I WAS DEVASTATED. HEARING THOSE WORDS “YOU HAVE CANCER” IS A SHOCK. IT’S DIFFICULT TO DESCRIBE. IN AN INSTANT YOUR LIFE IS CHANGED. I REMEMBER SOME TEARS. I WALK WITH G-D. AND I SAID, “G-D I NEED YOUR HELP. WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?” I KNEW THAT G-D WAS WITH ME. I WASN’T MAD. I DIDN’T THINK ABOUT DYING. I DIDN’T SAY “WHY ME?” I THOUGHT ABOUT LIVING. LET’S DO WHAT WE HAVE TO DO.**

**I CALLED SOME OF MY FRIENDS, RELATIVES AND ACQUAINTANCES. I KNEW I COULDN’T DO THIS ALONE. I KNEW IT WAS IMPORTANT TO TAKE THE HIGH ROAD AND BE PROACTIVE.**

**MONDAY I SPOKE TO MY SURGEON WHO SAID, “YOU COME IN TUESDAY AND WE’LL FIX YOU UP!” AGAIN SOMETHING POSITIVE!**

**JUST WHAT I NEEDED TO HEAR. WHEN I WENT TO THE JAMES ON TUESDAY I FELT A LITTLE STRANGE. I HAD ENTERED INTO A WOMEN'S WORLD OF BREAST CANCER. I WAS THE ONLY MALE FILLING OUT THE PAPERWORK. THEY SENSED I WAS UNCOMFORTABLE. THEY SAID THAT THEY DID HAVE SOME MEN COME IN. I BEGAN TO FILL OUT THE PAPERWORK. QUESTIONS LIKE "WHEN DID YOU HAVE YOUR LAST PERIOD?" IF YOU HAVEN'T HAD A PERIOD IN THE LAST 6 MONTHS WHY NOT? HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU HAD YOUR LAST MAMMOGRAM? NOW THERE WAS A QUESTION I COULD ANSWER! THE SURGEON CAME INTO THE EXAMINING ROOM. HE FOUND WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR AND THEN SAID, "WITH MALES WE DO MASTECTOMIES." EVERYTHING WOULD BE GONE INCLUDING THE NIPPLE. HEARING HIM SAY THOSE WORDS WAS A SHOCK. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I EXPECTED HIM TO SAY. YOU MIGHT THINK THAT AS A MALE IT WOULDN'T BOTHER ME. IT DID! I LIKE MY PARTS. MEN HAVE FEELINGS TOO.**