

## STEVE'S SURVIVING & THRIVING STORY

### PART 2

**DECEMBER 3, SURGERY. IT WAS COLD AND DARK. SURGERY WAS SCHEDULED FOR 6:30 AM. I WAS FIRST UP FOR THE DAY. I HAD TWO THOUGHTS: MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE BEEN SECOND SO THAT THE SURGEON COULD WARM UP. AND I WISHED I COULD HAVE HAD SOME COFFEE. I REMEMBER THE PRE-SURGICAL ROUTINE. I WAS NERVOUS.**

**WHEN I SAW MY SURGEON HE HAD HIS WHITE COAT ON. I THOUGHT HE LOOKED LIKE GENERAL PATTON. SUDDENLY I HAD THE FEELING OF G-D'S PRESENCE. I DECIDED TO TURN EVERYTHING OVER TO G-D AND MY SURGEON. I LET GO AND RELAXED.**

**I REMEMBER WAKING UP IN RECOVERY. MY BREAST WAS GONE. I WAS HEAVILY BANDAGED. I HAD A DRAIN. EVEN WITH PAIN MEDS I WAS SORE.**

**I WAS PRETTY UPSET. *I CAN TELL YOU THAT NOT ONLY DO REAL MEN WEAR PINK BUT REAL MEN CRY.***

**I WAS WELL TREATED AT THE JAMES. SPECIFICALLY I REMEMBER THE NURSES. THEY ARE ANGELS. THEY ARE**

**ALWAYS THERE TO HELP WHEN YOU ARE AT YOUR LOWEST—  
WHEN NOTHING IS RIGHT.**

**THE NEXT DAY I WENT HOME. I WAS BANDAGED AND SORE. I HAD  
THIS DRAIN AND A SCRIPT FOR PERCOCETS. I BEGAN MY SLOW  
RECOVERY. I HAD THE DRAIN FOR 30 DAYS. I HATED IT. THE  
DRESSING HAD TO BE CHANGED DAILY, OUTPUT MEASURED AND  
RECORDED AT LEAST TWICE DAILY. I RECEIVED CARDS, EMAILS,  
AND LETTERS FROM MANY FRIENDS AND RELATIVES.**

**I BEGAN TO HEAL—PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY. AS I HEALED I  
KNEW I HAD TO MOVE ON. I HAD TO STOP FEELING SORRY FOR  
MYSELF. I MIGHT HAVE HAD CANCER BUT CANCER WASN'T  
GOING TO HAVE ME. CANCER WASN'T GOING TO DEFINE ME.**

**I WAS HEALING PHYSICALLY. BUT I WAS FEELING SORRY FOR  
MYSELF. I WAS UNCOMFORTABLE. I WAS SORE AND I FELT SO  
DISFIGURED WHEN I LOOKED AT MYSELF IN THE MIRROR. I HAD  
PITY PARTIES FOR MYSELF. ONE DAY I PICKED UP SOME PAPERS  
THAT THE JAMES GAVE ME AND FOUND A BROCHURE FROM**

**"JAMES CARE FOR LIFE". THEY LISTED MANY PROGRAMS FOR SURVIVORSHIP. I CALLED THE PHONE NUMBER. A WOMAN NAMED JOYCE ANSWERED THE PHONE. I STARTED TALKING TO HER AND SHE LISTENED. THEN SHE SAID WHY DON'T YOU COME TO A CLASS THEY WERE HAVING THAT EVENING. A CLASS ON "DISCOVERING YOUR INNER POET." A POETRY CLASS! I SAID I DON'T READ POETRY AND I SURELY DON'T WRITE IT. SHE SAID, "DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT—JUST COME TO THE CLASS!" SO I CAME. IT WAS AT PANERA'S AND THEY HAD WARM CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES. THAT MADE ME FEEL BETTER. I MET OTHER PEOPLE. NO ONE FELT SORRY FOR ME. I ENJOYED THE CLASS. I DIDN'T START READING OR WRITING POETRY BUT I DID START TO JOURNAL—TO VERBALIZE MY THOUGHTS AND GET THEM OUT OF MY HEAD AND ON TO PAPER. I CONTINUE WITH THAT CLASS TODAY.**

**A FEW MONTHS LATER I TOOK A CLASS WITH 9 OTHER SURVIVORS. WITH THE HELP OF THE OSU THEATER DEPARTMENT, THEATER MAJOR STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS WE PUT ON A PLAY. WE WROTE OUR PARTS AND WORKED WITH THE INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS. WE PRACTICED FOR 4**

**MONTHS AND THEN PRESENTED OUR PLAY IN FRONT OF 250 PEOPLE AT THE DRAKE. IT WAS LIBERATING TO TELL THE MOST INTIMATE DETAILS OF OUR CANCER JOURNEY IN FRONT OF PEOPLE WE DIDN'T KNOW. I BEGAN TO COME TO TERMS WITH THE CHANGES THAT WERE TAKING PLACE IN MY LIFE. I WAS NO LONGER SELF-CONSCIOUS ABOUT MY CANCER. AND, BECAUSE MALE BREAST CANCER IS RARE, PEOPLE WOULD LISTEN TO ME AND ASK QUESTIONS WHEN I SPOKE.**

**AS TIME MOVED ON I BECAME UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE TERM *SURVIVOR*. IT'S GREAT TO SURVIVE—BUT THEN WHAT. I WAS AROUND PEOPLE WHO WANTED TO DO MORE THAN SURVIVE. WE WANTED TO THRIVE—TO GET BETTER—TO LIVE THE REST OF OUR LIVES WITH DIGNITY AND PURPOSE—TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE—TO MAKE EVERY DAY COUNT. IT'S GOOD TO SURVIVE--IT'S BETTER TO THRIVE.**