

Diary of a Cancer Patient 2011 Part II

Monday July 4 – Had a friend in for supper. We had hot dogs, potato salad and baked beans and watermelon for desert. It was a warm day and so we ate inside. We then watched fireworks on TV, PBS in Washington DC and NBC Macy's in New York. Much better than braving the heat and the crowds. I am not a fan of fireworks.

Tuesday July 5 – This is my last week of radiation. I will be totally finished on Friday. They are treating my scar area only. They made a special form to cover that area and bring the machine very close to my skin. The treatment lasts for nearly thirty seconds; much longer than the other treatments. I think I will never forget the sound of that machine sending these harmful rays into my body. Harmful in a sense but hopefully will eradicate any last instances of cancer left in my body. The sound is much like my garbage disposal and I wince every time I run it at home now after cleaning up the kitchen. Hopefully in time I will forget,

Thursday July 7 – Went over to the mountain to try and climb as far as I could. I have been much of a couch potato these last couple of weeks not wanting to bring on another episode of pleurisy. I have been walking when I can. But it's hot and that gives me another excuse.

I start the climb at nine am which is late for this time of year. I can feel the heat, but then every so often there is a cool breeze. There are few people on the mountain today; it was easy finding a parking space. I like it this way and hate having to fight the usual crowds of people that gravitate to this mountain every day. I climb to the first bench, probably a quarter mile and sit down and take a long drink of water. The sun is intense even at this hour of the morning. I wear protective clothing, sun screen and a hat. I then pick my way further up the mountain to the next bench, six tenths of a mile. This is it for me. I can go no further today. This is as far as I would go when I was in intense chemo therapy. I do some stretching and then head back down, knowing that another day I will be able to climb to the top again. There is a time for every thing, and this is my time to take it easy. Difficult for me, but I can do this.

Friday July 8 – I have reached the day where my treatments will be over. It has been a long haul but I am finally here. I go to my treatment and the nurses congratulate me. They give a bag full of gifts and they have a little ceremony where I ring a large Soleri bell to mark the end of my radiation. Seven long weeks; the daily radiation that has ravaged my skin and probably other body cells as well, but hopefully has taken care of any leftover cancer cells that might be lurking in my body.

The nurses ask if I'm going to celebrate. And I tell them that I have a cold beer waiting at home in the refrigerator; low key. It's over; all my treatment is over. Now I look forward to reconstruction, probably next winter. It's quite amazing looking back now, at how I have come through this time. I have kept myself as healthy as possible and I feel pretty good all things considered. I've lost fifteen pounds but I needed to do that anyway and I

am now at my ideal weight. I did have to buy new jeans and shorts, but that wasn't all bad.

Now I just have to decide what I want to do with the rest of my life. I have another chance and I had better make good use of these next years.

Monday July 11 – My son is coming to town this week. His father is having surgery on Thursday. I won't see much of him, but I'll pick him up from the airport and then probably take him back when he leaves.

My skin is still blistered and I keep applying creams and aloe to it. It will be better one day. I am also pretty tired, but as I mentioned earlier, I am taking it pretty easy. There is nothing that I have to do but heal my body and get well again.

I have been reading these past few months, about a novel or book every week. A writer must read you know. I have read some really good novels and some not so good ones that were hard to get through. Now I have to get back to the writing.

Saturday July 16 – What a weekend this had turned out to be. I have my writing club luncheon today and then my friend from Beaverton is in town and we're having dinner tonight along with another friend with whom I will be traveling to Mexico in November.

I was asked to speak at my club luncheon about my past year activities which of course were mainly my battle with the cancer. I hadn't prepared anything and spoke extemporaneously but from the heart. When speaking I talked about what I had learned from this. I found that I had more wonderful loving friends than I ever thought possible. And that I needed to now reset my priorities and start doing the things that I have been putting off for such a long time.

I went to dinner with my other friends in the evening. I had a brochure and map of the area where we will be staying in Puerto Vallarta. We perused all of the activities and day trips available. We will be doing a zip line in the rain forest canopy, some snorkeling, maybe some sea kayaking. One of the trips has a repel down the side of a waterfall. Let the fun begin.

And then in early September I am going to Washington State to visit a friend and he said that we are going to climb/hike Mount Rainer. I have always wanted to do that and now is my chance. I had better get my hiking legs in shape.

Sunday July 17 – My son and his father are coming to dinner. I had better get busy and clean the house. I am preparing meatloaf, new potatoes with cilantro prepared in olive oil and fresh asparagus. My ex refuses to eat fish or chicken.

Around five I receive a phone call from a lady who was referred to me by another friend. She mentioned that she has breast cancer and asked if I would mind talking with her. I told her that I would be happy to. We talked for about an hour. I wanted to tell her that there

are good treatments available and breast cancer is curable and that she should keep a positive attitude and that will help in her treatment. I hope I was helpful to her.

My son and his father arrive with Charlie; my ex's dog a Wheaton/poodle mix. My dogs go wild, having another dog to play with. The dinner was a success along with the homemade ice cream that I make with my new ice cream machine.

Monday July 18 – It is super hot here, but that is to be expected. Spend most of my time indoors these days, except when I walk or go to the dog park.

I had an appointment to get my breast prosthesis this morning. I have been putting this off and now is the time to get it done. I got two of these prosthesis, one for regular wear and one for sports and swimming. And three new bras to put them in. I will have to say that they look quite natural and I feel good when I am wearing them. I have very little pain now and my skin is molting in the area where the radiation was done and there is new soft sin underneath. I will be back to normal soon.

I took my son to the airport. His plane was delayed so we decided to have dinner. We chose Chili's as it was convenient and we could order a margarita or two. Our waitress was so perky and friendly. And then she mentioned that she had been in cancer treatment and I asked what kind of cancer and she said breast. When I said that I had just finished breast cancer treatment, she sat down with us and we talked. She is soon to be a grandmother, but she looks so young. She's from Canada and doesn't have health insurance in the States. My thoughts and prayers are with her.

Thursday July 21 – Went to climb my mountain today. It is hot. I left at 8:30 and got there about 8:45. I climbed a ways and then ran into a friend and we talked for awhile. I then went on my way. I was intending to climb to the second bench today right under the switch backs. But as I crossed over to the other side of the mountain I started to get that feeling of heating up and feeling very tired. Time to turn around. Today was not the day to push. I ran into my neighbor on the way down and we talked. When I reached the bottom, I was thoroughly overheated; I drank as much water as I could. When I arrived home, I looked at my face and it was beet red. I splashed water on it and drank more water. I also ate a fresh orange and started to feel better.

I had dinner with friends; a birthday dinner. There were seven of us little old ladies and we do have fun together, telling stories and laughing. I showed off my new fake breast and everyone said it looked really good. We finished early, around eight and I went home and went to bed to read my latest novel. The dogs climbed in bed as well, as they usually do.

