

COURAGE, LIFE & HOPE

REFLECTIONS *of a journey*



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Barb Baumer

Since she was initially diagnosed with breast cancer in 1998, Barb Baumer has had heard the words, “It’s cancer,” three more times. Most recently, in December 2006, the cancer had metastasized to her liver and to a spot on a rib.

“Each time you hear those words, you panic,” Barb said. “You think it’s the end of your life, but it isn’t. The word cancer doesn’t mean the end; it means that the journey has taken another bend. You have to make the most of it and do your best.”

It’s taken a long time, and a lot of work, to fashion her positive attitude. When she discovered a lump the first time, Barb’s life was in flux. She had been dating her current husband Pat, who owns 2510 Restaurant in Wausau, for about two years.

A mammogram had uncovered an irregularity, and doctors were concerned enough to perform an ultrasound the same day, and surgery the next.

When the pathology report confirmed their fears, Barb relied heavily on Pat. Her daughters were grown and had moved out of town, and she was too emotional to initiate the conversation with her family.

“He actually was the one that called and told my family, because I couldn’t,” she said. “I couldn’t get the words out. He had to do it, then he handed me the phone and I was able to talk.”

Almost immediately, Barb and her support group began to cultivate the positive attitude that has carried her through bad news, chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery. Luckily, she has tolerated her

treatments well. She likened the effects to a light flu, which dulled her senses and dampened her enthusiasm. But by Christmas 1998, she had completed treatment, and her hair was growing back.

“It didn’t bother me,” she said. “My kids estimated that I saved 72 hours of my life and a lot of money, not futzing with my hair. And I didn’t have a bad hair day. We really laughed.”

Navigating the years from 1998 to now, Barb has embraced life. On Valentine’s Day 2000, she and Pat were married on a beach

at sunset in Naples, Fla. A photographer from the local paper happened by and took their portrait, which appeared on the front page the following day.

And though the cancer turned up in 2002 on one of her ribs, in 2005 under her left arm, and most recently in December 2006, Barb maintains a positive spirit. As new medicines have created new challenges, such as

loss of appetite, and pain and swelling in her hands and feet, Barb has incorporated acupuncture, yoga and massage into her treatment regimen. They help her care for body and spirit, while the tools of Western medicine attack her cancer.

With positive energy, humor and support from Pat and her daughters, Barb continues to do the laundry, work in the restaurant, and do all the other “normal” things people do. But cancer has given her a new perspective.

“It has taught me to live in the moment,” she said. “You notice the wind. You spend a few more minutes with the grandkids. It’s the little things.”

