

COURAGE, LIFE & HOPE

# REFLECTIONS *of a journey*



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## Nancy Laliberte

It's been a long road from where Nancy Laliberte was in December 2000 to where she is today. But her current life – happily remarried with a beautiful new baby – makes the difficult journey worth it.

Almost four years ago, Nancy was diagnosed with breast cancer – an event that can throw anyone's world into chaos. Her life, however, was already incredibly hectic. She was a single mother of two children, 6 years and 8 years, her ex-husband lived out of town, and she had a stressful job.

"I was trying to be a good mom, trying to juggle everything, maintain everything; it was hard," she said. "I called it perpetual overwhelmingitis."

The cancer treatment and anxiety made things worse before they got better. Physicians performed a lumpectomy, but follow-up images showed dirty margins, so Nancy had a mastectomy. Nine weeks of chemotherapy drained her energy. But she found ways to deal with the treatments.

After a rough first treatment, the right combination of anti-nausea drugs made chemotherapy tolerable, but still left her feeling as though she'd been hit by a truck. She would have chemo on Thursday, then spend a couple of days napping, reading books and watching classic movies.

"By Saturday evening, I could feel (the drugs) leave my body," she said. "On Sunday I got stronger, then Monday I was fine and back at work."

In addition to developing routines, Nancy relied on humor and a tight group of family and friends to cope with the disease. She remembers a time when her kids were playing loudly in the hallway, and it was

bothering her. She ran out to them and said, "You kids are getting so loud, I could just pull my hair out!" Then she whipped off her wig, and the children squealed with delight.

In March 2001, Nancy finished her chemotherapy treatments. Then her life really began to change for the better:

- That fall, on Nancy's first big outing with her girlfriends since her diagnosis, she met Mike Laliberte. The two began dating.

- In April 2002, Nancy left her stressful job, and began her own freelance design business, which got her out of the 'stress zone' and into the work/life balance she had always sought.

- In July 2002, Mike and Nancy were married.

- Ten months later, Nancy gave birth to a baby boy.

Today, Nancy takes steps to maintain her happy and healthy life. "I try to remember to enjoy things," she said. "I also remember to take time to

exercise, to take care of myself. For women especially, you are taught to take care of everyone else first. But how can you fill other cups when yours is empty? I take care of myself and am better able to take care of my family."

Cancer hasn't been a death sentence for Nancy Laliberte. In fact, her diagnosis was the beginning of a new and improved life. On the highway of Nancy's life, she said cancer has been a gravel-road detour. After coming through that rocky section of her journey, she said she's now on the garden path.

