



YWCA
EDMONTON

A TURNING POINT
FOR WOMEN

Janet

Shirley Curle

At 46 she had everything she ever hoped for; a fantastic husband, three wonderful children, and a beautiful home in a supportive community. They played racquet ball and squash, tobogganed and skied in the winter. They camped, swam and hiked in the summer. The children were all doing well in school and her husband was a successful business man. Then the rug was pulled out from under them. Janet was diagnosed with cancer. Surgery to remove a cancer from her breast, followed by a short regimen of radiation left them reeling, but at the end of two years, she was given a clean bill of health.

Relief and thankfulness became part of their busy lives. She went back to school and finished her Masters degree. She welcomed a daughter in law, three beautiful grandchildren and life was wonderful and more hectic than ever.

Then, sixteen years following her surgery, at her regular check up, a metastasis of the original cancer was discovered. A laparoscopy was performed and the diagnosis was a tumour had attached itself to her aorta and diaphragm. The location made it inoperable and once again their world came to a screeching halt. With surgery not an option, the recommended treatment was radiation and chemotherapy. She was provided with information outlining the possible side effects, short and long term, of these drugs, and refused both. Her file was returned to her General Practitioner with a notation that, *she was a very uncooperative patient.*

Her doctor then referred her to the Integrated Centre for Healing in Vancouver, where medical doctors work with alternative medicine practitioners to offer the best of both worlds, for the treatment of the patient. Here, she was counseled on diet and exercise, together with less invasive medicines. She religiously followed a diet restricting so many foods, it was easier to say what she could eat, than what she couldn't. She exercised, lost weight, looked and felt great.

But the battle was still not won. She was experiencing a great deal of discomfort in her chest accompanied by difficulty breathing. Another series of tests found liquid accumulating around her left lung. A stent was attached to her upper left side and every week, for two years, she went to the clinic to have the liquid drained. Then as suddenly as it started, the liquid stopped accumulating, and the stent was removed.

Once again she felt reprieved. Her weight stabilized and she resumed her activities with a vengeance. She saw both of her daughters marry and happily welcomed two more grandsons. She and her husband toured Canada in a Volkswagon van, which she threatened to paint with flowers, but it was during this trip that she knew things were not quite right, again. She was suffering excruciating pain in her back and could hardly stand, sit or lie down. A check-up confirmed the cancer had spread to her bones. Six radiation treatments were prescribed for the pain and for a time seemed to work. But soon the pain was recurring, not only in her back but in her head, arms and neck. A promise that chemotherapy would ease the pain motivated her to finally accept the inevitable.

She takes the treatment for one week, is dreadfully ill, and has one week off. Toward the middle of her week off, she is her old self, walking and doing as much as she is able. She listens to her body, and rests when rest is needed. She is looking forward to the birth of twin grandchildren in July and I have no doubt she will make it, and several of their birthdays in the years to come.

Her battle has been long and hard fought, and should it be lost in the end, her strength and courage will live on forever in the hearts of her family. My sister Janet is one very special lady.

Author: *Shirley Curle*

