

Breast cancer in today's world

There is one thing which has made itself perfectly clear in the last few weeks, breast cancer is an equal opportunity employer. Two family members and a friend have received the diagnosis and their lives have been changed forever. That is not to say I don't believe in their cures, because I do, but a diagnosis of cancer or any life threatening illness is a life changing event. One woman is in her 40s and lives in another country, the others make their home in the Sunflower State, as I said EOE.

Phase II
Mary Kay
Woodyard

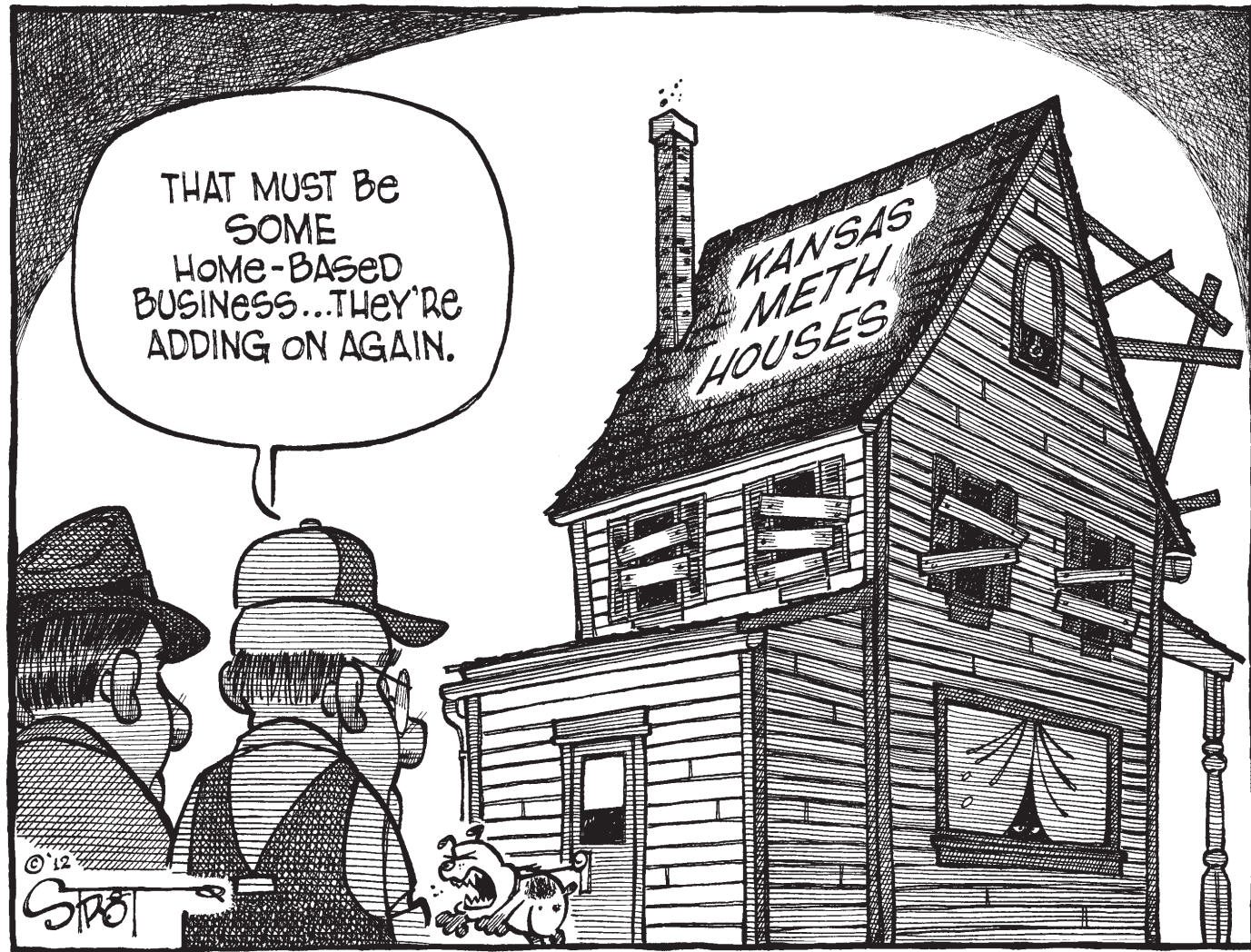


My grandmother had breast cancer in the 1940s. She had a mastectomy and lived into her 90s. Treatments were very different then. Chemotherapy and radiation were not part of the package, neither was reconstructive surgery. Now we know all breast cancers are not the same and treatment is tailored to the woman, her type of cancer and when it was found. We have come "a long way, baby."

But it isn't just the patient we pray for, but for the family members who stand by feeling helpless in the face of despair. Husbands struggle to find the right words and as one husband told me, "I don't care what they have to do, I just want it gone. I just want her well." The need to be strong frequently creates illness in caregivers as they try to maintain a sense of family normalcy while creating an atmosphere of peacefulness. Impossible to attain while struggling with their own fears.

In one case the woman has a child nearly seven years old. That child is the same age her father was when his own mother was diagnosed with what appeared, at that time, to be a life threatening illness. Maybe history does repeat itself, at least the monster lives nearby.

The good news is the father's mother survived and lives happily, and by her standards, healthily to this day. All three of the young women have access to incredible doctors and treatments, but most importantly they have supportive family and friends. I believe the latter is the most important part of it all. As the mother who survived, I know friends and family offer more strength, power and courage than possibly even treatment does. Mailto:mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net



The glory of forgetfulness and forgiving

A former friend spent the weekend with us.

You will understand why I say former as my story progresses.

The hubby took us out to eat. We watched basketball and rented some movies.

One movie we watched was "Men Who Stare at Goats," a spoof on the Army's experimentation with mind alteration. It's not true, yet it could have happened. It had its moments, and George Clooney. So it gets a couple of stars but not rave reviews.

It is observed of the head of the operation: "Due to his extreme use of hallucinogenic drugs he doesn't remember anything that happened since 1972."

My friend said, "I really don't either!"

Me either! My mind was altered by marriage and kids!!!

My friend didn't just come out for movies and basketball. She said she would help me do something on our basement remodeling project.

I've got a carpenter. It has been wonderful, I tell him what to do and he does it! He sweeps the floor every night before he goes home. He washed a basement window (probably because he needed more light--but still). He scoured the utility sink when he changed the faucet!

I asked him if he does that at home. He said, "What happens at work stays

This Too Shall Pass
Nancy Hagman



at work!"

No matter how efficient he is I want to be able to say I contributed in some way so I'm supposed to be stripping the finish off some old doors we are re-purposing. Paint, primer, old varnish, stain---I got tired of that in a hurry.

My friend said, "I'll help you strip the doors. Or paint. Or anything you want!"

So I said, "We are wallpapering the kitchen ceiling."

Admittedly that has nothing to do with the basement. But I've had the paper for four years or maybe since 1972---I really don't remember! It's beautiful paper; it looks like the old tin ceilings.

I attempted to put one strip up but it is at least a two person job. My family looked at me like I was deranged when I asked for help. I left a little strip up there! It irritated me: like a splinter in your finger you can't get out! It also was a little seed of hope. Someday the right conditions would come along and it would happen!

I try not to ask much of people. I

didn't ask the carpenter to scour the sink. If I ask for help, it is because I need it! So if someone is just going to foolishly volunteer, things can and will get out of hand!

Before her arrival, I took everything off the walls and the counters and moved all the chairs and stools and the table and the things sitting around out of the kitchen. (I have too much stuff!) I covered the appliances and the buffet I cannot move by myself. I scraped the popcorn off the ceiling. What a mess. I vacuumed. I washed up the rest of the residue.

My friend arrived. She looked the situation over and didn't run away! I took that as a good sign!

It was very hard work. The first strip took some help from Junior. But we got smarter. We almost ran out of paper but we are creative! Up and down the ladders. Ohhh, my neck!

The more we progressed the more amazing it looked. Each time the hubby came in he would admire. We got positive affirmation from his mother and the carpenter. Two days and we were finished.

How do you repay such a friend???

Luckily, she doesn't remember anything since 1972! I can go visit her! She won't even think of seeking retribution!

Forgive and forget. And if you are forgetful enough you can skip forgiving entirely!

I am a botanist doing research on the distribution of the bur oak in northwest Kansas. I hope that this letter might put me in contact with local people in Norton County who might be knowledgeable about natural oak populations in your county.



I am interested in wild, native bur oaks, not in trees planted by property owners. If anyone knows of small groves of bur oaks in Norton County, I would appreciate it if they would contact me, either by telephone (303-442-5662) or email (allan.taylor@colorado.edu). Likely candidates would be trees growing along streams or beside springs, in a wild setting with other native trees such as green ash, black walnut, hackberry, and American elm. The trees should also be very large, mature trees, likely to be at least 150 years old.

Any help will be sincerely appreciated. Thank you very much in advance.
Sincerely yours,
Dr. Allan R. Taylor
University of Colorado, Boulder

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Sure you can talk, but can you listen to others

Listener or Talker?

I recently read an article in which the author stated that each of us has a story to tell, and that we need to listen to one another's stories. I pride myself on being a good listener, able to draw the other out and allow that person to share what is important at that moment. I am not talking about "doing therapy," just communicating to that individual that he/she matters and is important to me. That made me wonder how many of us are listeners and how many are "talkers."

A short time ago a couple did that for my husband and me. We are waiting for the results of a medical evaluation I have undergone. I explained to this couple that I felt as though someone had hung me on a nail, and I am just blowing around in the wind. He talked to us about acceptance, and I replied that it's difficult to accept what is not yet known. That when the physician gives me a diagnosis and outlines a course of treatment, I can work on acceptance. But right now it's the lack of knowing that is keeping me uneasy. We cannot

Life is Good
Rita Speer



schedule anything more than a couple of weeks in the future or make concrete plans for our planned vacation.

This couple allowed both of us to verbalize our anxieties and fears. They were not judgmental nor in the mode of telling us what we "ought" to do. Questions were asked and observations were made as we talked about our feelings. They offered neither advice nor direction, simply reinforcing that they had heard what we were really saying. When the conversation closed, both my husband and I felt a sense of relief that we had finally found someone who was able to simply hear what we needed to say.

The following day, we had the opposite experience. We were away from the house, simply sitting and

enjoying each other's company. We had little need to say anything to each other at that moment. Someone we know came up, joined us and began talking. This person talked while we were together, at times telling some clever stories, using a play on words.

In two days' time, we encountered completely opposite situations. In one, the couple was able to lay aside whatever need they had to talk about themselves to hear us, yes, to minister to us. In the other, we were simply an audience to someone's need to talk. It's possible some people talk incessantly because of their own need.

I believe we all do have a story to tell, and I'll tell you mine if you truly want to hear it. But I also want to hear your story and have you tell me about yourself. Sometimes even the best listeners among us have a need to share about themselves. I encourage you to develop the skill of hearing others, for you will learn so very much. And if you need to talk, find someone who has developed the skill of listening with compassion and empathy.

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