

Judy Norton
Breast Cancer Story

It was December 1998, and I was busy getting the last of the Christmas shopping completed. We had plans to take our girls to Chicago to spend the holidays. I had my yearly mammogram scheduled that day and knew I had so much to do, I thought about just skipping it that year. My mammograms had come back negative for years so what was the big deal just skipping? But I decided while I was near Hamilton Place anyway, I would just go by and get it. A couple of days later, I got a call that they wanted to redo the mammogram on my right side. I didn't think anything of it and ran down that afternoon to take care of it. I needed to go to the mall anyway!

We were in Chicago, having a great time and I decided to check messages at home on the answering machine. It was my doctor, Dr. Bolton, calling me! Doctors never call! He asked if I would call his office when I had a chance to come in to talk. And of course that was a Friday afternoon so I had to wait until Monday to call and see what was up. The office on Monday made me an appointment that afternoon to see Dr. Bolton. The mammogram had a suspicious place on it so he wanted me to follow up with Dr. Rawlings. The appointment was made rather quickly and off I went to visit but first I ran by and picked up the x-rays. I snuck a look at the radiologist report-malignancy! What?? I think the numbness was starting to set in. Dr. Rawlings wanted to do a stereotactic biopsy. It was scheduled for a week later, the second week of January 1999. The results came back showing DCIS or Ductal Carcinoma in Situ, or from what I would learn, an early form of breast cancer lining the milk ducts, usually not even in a stage yet. But it was still there and needed to come out! I had my first two segmentectomy's and the first one they did not get clear enough margins. So another one was scheduled, and again, not clear enough margins. The next decision was to continue on to the mastectomy or start radiation therapy. I visited with doctors to get my questions answered. What a decision that I had to make! I had decided to go ahead with the mastectomy and followed up with reconstruction with the Tram Flap procedure. Several lymph nodes were removed and they were all clear, which meant no chemo! That was April 1, 1999, no April Fool's joke! After 3 months, I had a follow up procedure to match the other side to the reconstructed side.

This April it will be 15 years that I am cancer free! I am so thankful I did not skip that appointment that day in December! If I had, I don't think I would be giving you the same story. It would have a very different route! I am constantly reminding my friends and family to not miss their mammograms!