

Survival and Hope Life After Cancer



DOROTHY LETT, 65
DIAGNOSIS: OVARIAN
CANCER

The Basics:

- **RESIDENCE:** Hesperia
- **OCCUPATION:** Worked for super markets in New Jersey; board member of Amalgamated Meat Cutters Union Local 464A.
- **FAMILY:** Husband, Tyrone Lett, 71 when he died; Toosdhi McDaniel-Simmons, 46, daughter; four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren
- **HOBBIES:** Makes dream baskets for local charities.
- **PHILOSOPHY:** What I do is to the best of my abilities, done out of love and because I care about people. Do what God put in your heart to do. My reward will come later, not from on Earth but from up above.

By Alberta Hale Crigler

Dorothy Lett was a young mother when she began experiencing symptoms of some sort of reproductive problem.

"I kept getting really, really sick," Lett said. "I wasn't having menstrual cycles like I should, and I was in so much pain, they thought it was my (fallopian) tubes.

"My first surgery, they removed my left tube. In six months, I was sick again. I was not only not able to function as a wife, I just kept getting ill.

"The next doctor did a PAP smear and biopsy and said, 'Dorothy, it is cancer and you are too young to have cancer like that. If we do this, we have to do a complete hysterectomy.'



"I only had one child. It affected me by not being able to have more children. But at the time, I did not realize how serious cancer was. I just knew I didn't want to hurt anymore. That was more than 40 years ago, and Lett said many memories of her ordeal have faded with time.

"I know I went in for three sessions of radiation," she said, "and then I had to be checked every year for the next two years. So far, I have been cancer free."

Lett said she did not inform her family about her cancer diagnosis. "The only family I told was my (first) husband and my oldest sister. "I was in New Jersey and everyone was here in California. I honestly didn't think the cancer was as bad as I found out later it was.

"I wouldn't do that now. Even my daughter has had it in one of her fallopian tubes. She didn't tell me, and then finally she did, and I was devastated. Then I realized how my family felt.

"I didn't realize cancer is as dreadful as I do now. You just want to be well and keep moving.

"Two of my sisters had it. It is a disease that runs in my family. This is a rough disease and people don't realize, it not only affects your life, it affects your family and all your friends.

"There is nothing your family can do to (heal) you. All they can do is hold your hand and be there for support.

"As I grew older, I realized just what kind of disease I had, and how blessed and lucky I was. I am very supportive of anyone caught up in that situation."

Lett's only help during her treatment "was basically my first husband and his mother – they got me through the worst of it, got me through my treatments.

"I have been truly, truly blessed. I lost my second husband, Tyrone Lett, in 2014. I was the sick one and he was the healthy one, and he went first.



"I didn't realize cancer is as dreadful as I do now."

"The day after I buried him, I totaled my car, and God has been good to me because I walked away from it without a scratch".

Now, Lett volunteers with the American Cancer Society and participates in Relay for Life. Additionally, she volunteers at the ABC123 Christian Academy and Hesperia United Methodist Church. She is vice chairman of the board of directors at the Rock'n Our Disabilities Foundation.

Lett also creates gift baskets that she sells and donates through her Facebook page, Lett's Dream Baskets. The baskets have themes such as children's toys, toiletries and kitchen items, among others.

"The bulk of the baskets are donated to different charities," Lett said. I donate anywhere from one to 25 baskets.

"If I can raise awareness of other organizations, I do that, too.

"I am scared if I slow down, I might go down and join some of my family members. I will have to slow down one day, but today isn't the day."

Another Perspective



As a long-term survivor, Dorothy Lett said when she meets someone battling cancer now, "I have to wonder, how much of a help or an influence can I be.

"They are at a stage I have gone through, and I don't know what their prognosis in the end is going to be.

"I wonder how they look at me. You know, for the grace of God, that could be me. You have to think they wonder too.

"They do get hope, especially someone with cervical or ovarian cancer. They think: 'She is still here, I have a shot at this.'"



The American Cancer Society provides a 24 hour service to answer questions about diagnosis, insurance, local support and resources

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