

Cynthia...

A Journey of Faith

A brave woman's battle with breast cancer.



memoir written by Marie Rieck

2022

Cynthia... A Journey of Faith

This is a story of faith in God, support of others and determination through tough times with breast cancer. I know Cynthia Black from SC because our boys, Brian and Jordan, went to school together and were “best buddies” through the years. We lived close so our boys often played together on weekends when not on the basketball court or baseball field.

I used Cynthia’s own words to describe this journey as many of us can’t imagine how we would face such a challenge... I asked her if she had a favorite quote and she replied... My sister and niece gave me a bracelet that has a Bible verse on it. I wore the bracelet all the time. The verse was Philippians 4: 6-7 and it was a constant reminder for Cynthia to place her trust in God which I know she did!

Philippians 4:6

⁶ Don’t worry about anything, instead pray about everything.

July Mammogram: I waited over a year due to COVID to get my annual mammogram...I was supposed to get my yearly mammogram in May 2020. With covid, I was scared to go and finally went in July. I was called back for another mammogram then an ultrasound. The mass was very small, and the doctor said if I came in May, it may not have shown up. Only blessing of covid that the mass was visible and treatment could begin as soon as possible.

First diagnosis: Radiation. Ultrasound didn’t show anything in the lymph nodes.

AUGUST 2020: Lumpectomy and lymph node removal. Pathology report showed cancer in the lymph nodes. Therefore, Chemo and Radiation. That was a most horrible day. Since Cancer showed in the lymph nodes, I had to have a PET scan of my body. I was very scared and remembered Philippians 4:6. I received a call that the PET scan didn’t show cancer anywhere else.



This was my first chemo – I put my faith in God



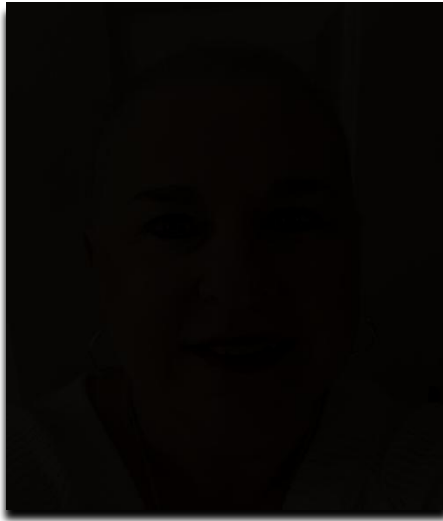
First chemo. I loved this mask. Received lots of comments from nurses and patients. I was determined to rock the treatment!

TREATMENT DETAILS:

- 4 chemo treatments every 2 weeks – Adriamycin & Cytosan. I slept a lot and didn't have a lot of energy. Appetite decreased. Some foods didn't taste good.
- 12 weekly Taxol chemo treatments. Weekly steroids which caused no sleep and weight gain.
- 30 rounds of radiation. Every day during the week. Last 2 weeks were hard. Very tired and the burn at the lymph node area was bad. I was constantly applying lotions.
- Bad burn on my neck. I told the nurse radiation was harder than chemo.

Covid vaccine 3/16/2021 Exactly 1 month after chemo. My oncologist wanted me to wait for 1 month. She said my body would respond better to the vaccine. That day, my husband (Thomas) and I went to get the vaccine. It was the best day. We had waited to get that vaccine.

Challenges such as the loss of my hair and wearing hats and wigs was difficult, but part of the reality of the challenge I was facing.



Hair loss was not easy.



Learning to be fashionable with hats!

I had wonderful support of my husband, family, church family, friends, and work friends. In August, my daughter moved to VA to start a new job and my son went back to college. My husband, Thomas, did everything at home and took great care of me. His support and care were amazing!! It's been an emotional roller coaster. I am incredibly grateful to all of my support system. I had wonderful doctors and nurses. The staff at SCOA (SC Oncology Associates) were awesome. Very grateful to them too. My chemo nurse, Chris, was the best. She had a lot of tips on what to do for the side effects. I listened to Chris, and I thank Chris so much for taking great care of me at SCOA.



*My favorite crocheted hat –
The blue color highlights Cynthia's lovely blue eyes!*



*Thanksgiving Day 2020. It was wonderful day with family.
First time wearing the wig "Sandy" with all of the family.*

Good news! May 2021 – my mammogram report came back great and that was a very happy day! I will continue with mammograms every 6 months. Please get your regular cancer screening tests completed!

Treatment moving forward: I am only taking one daily medication which is a hormone blocker for several years because my cancer was fed by estrogen and progesterone. I will see the oncologist every 3 months until they tell me otherwise. They will follow me closely, which is great. I know I can face any future health issues with the help of family, friends, and God.

Please know whatever challenges you face, you can get through it. I'm constantly reminded of God's healing presence as I look at my bracelet and remember.... ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything,^(A) but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.^(B) ⁷ And the peace of God,^(C) which transcends all understanding,^(D) will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

God's peace be with you too! Cynthia.



*Ring the bell in celebration of my last day of chemo on 2/16/21!
Yeah!! I was so excited. God is good!*



*My last day of radiation 3/23/21... Yeah!
Cynthia is a woman of faith...you can see the peace of God in her eyes.*

*I hope her story of faith and strength will inspire others faced with health challenges,
Way to **Rock the Treatment** Cynthia!*

*Love you!
Marie Rieck, RN, BSN, MPH
St. Augustine, Florida*

**Very soon after completing this memoir, Marie Rieck was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor. Sadly, she passed away on November 26, 2022. I am forever grateful for the support shown to my wife.*