

2 My Ticket to Ride

Because you feel worthy, you know choice
Because you know choice, you take action
Because you take action, you flourish
—Doorways to Daily Soul Nurturance

“She’s got a ticket to ride . . .” – John Lennon & Paul McCartney

The days of follow-up hospital testing revealed the cancer was ovarian. The advice was to schedule immediate surgery.

It was then I began to learn the complex language of cancer. For example, I learned about tumor markers and CA-125's. CA stands for Cancer Antigen. I had many CA-125 blood analysis tests and continue having them to this day. As a tumor marker, it measured the protein secreted by ovarian cancer cells. A CA-125 test monitors how effectively the various chemotherapy drugs are performing during treatment.

My initial CA-125 count was 2789. In all innocence and ignorance, I asked, “Well, what should it be?” “Anything under 35,” was the response. Oh my, what an enormous discrepancy. I had quite a way to go before I reached 35 or less!

Fusing and Yoking

With the testing completed, I could now come home. My husband, James, came to pick me up carrying a gorgeous Zygocactus (Christmas cactus) ablaze with a profusion of brilliant magenta blossoms. What a shining symbol of hope this was as we grappled with the new reality unfolding before us.

Discharge day was also our wedding anniversary, and James had brought the plant to honor our special day. The Zygocactus served up the next *Mystical Moment Preview* signaling to me what was ahead for us. “Zygo” is a prefix of Greek origin meaning “fusion” or “yoked.” Little did James and I know how much “fusing and yoking” experiences were in the cards for us in the months to come. I can never express enough deep heartfelt gratitude for his devoted support. At that time, we had no idea of the many grueling months ahead of us involving my care and recovery.

Everything Always Works Out All Right for Me

Before I left the hospital, I discovered it was standard procedure for them to assign an oncologist to me. For me this was an excellent hospital practice since making an informed choice about an oncologist was way out of my element. Assigned to my case was Matthew Borst, M.D. As I progressed through the cancer process with him, I found him to be a good fit for me.

To add to my cancer education, I learned about oncologists and gynecologic-oncologists or “gyn-ons.” Dr. Borst was a gyn-onc. Not knowing anything about him as I left the hospital, I trusted he was a skilled caregiver. What choice did I have? My life would be in his hands for many months to come. A few days after he was assigned to me, reassurance about his skills and abilities came from a medical professional co-worker of my daughter's. She too had experienced ovarian cancer and was now well. Dr. Borst had been her doctor, and she sang his praises. I chalked that bit of information up to another *Mystical Moment Preview* directing me towards wellness.

My confidence in Dr. Borst was further affirmed when I overheard an emergency department doctor telling another doctor, “Dr. Borst walks on water,” and a local gynecologist who learned he was my gyn-onc described him as “a shepherd.” Hearing the high esteem by which he was held by his peers was gratifying. Again, one more *Mystical Moment Preview*. I affirmed my wise mantra: *Everything in my life always works out for me.*

The hospital discharge nurse informed me to expect Dr. Borst’s call the next day, Saturday. Really now, a doctor who makes telephone calls on a weekend? A doctor who even makes calls? This seemed too incredible to believe!

I also had an appointment with Dr. Borst three days later on Monday.

I Find My Ticket to Ride

The following day, at home, on Saturday, I set up a folder to house the mounds of medical paperwork that were beginning to accumulate. Knowing myself well, I knew this was not the time for paperwork to accrue and create unmanageable stacks and piles. As I read and filed each sheet of paper, the final paper caught my attention. It was the only paper that had been folded into quarters. My curiosity was piqued.

When I unfolded it, the title at the top of the page leapt out at me: Ticket to Ride. I dissolved into laughter. It was the routing form for the hospital transporter when he wheeled my gurney from the emergency department up to the hospital's cancer floor. After he dropped me off he didn't remember to take the paper with him. What a gift he left for me! This precious little piece of paper was another *Mystical Moment Preview* telling me I was going to be fine. I had My Ticket To Ride—to wellbeing. I changed the lyrics in the Beatle's song to *I Had a Ticket to Ride, and I cared.*

I shared my laughter and delight with James. He then put the Beatle's *Ticket to Ride* song on. (Yep, he still has it.) Listening to the Beatle's and other music from way back when, created a beautiful, intimate, and celebratory healing time for the two of us, assuring us I was going to be okay. Again, I felt at peace. I appreciated this *Mystical Moment Preview* blessing.

There was no telephone call that Saturday from Dr. Borst as promised.

On Sunday, Dr. Borst telephoned, apologizing for not calling as planned as he was in surgery that day. He stated he wanted to schedule my surgery for the following Tuesday—in two days. Yikes! Since we were meeting the next day, I told him we could discuss it then. Events were moving fast. I hung up the telephone. I felt unnerved, rushed, and pressured.

Deer in the Headlights

Monday, my “support team” consisting of husband James, medical professional daughter Lisa, and I met with Dr. Borst. He explained the need for surgery. He spoke about my survival odds related to my condition and many other topics. It was a challenge for me to track and absorb everything he said. I was certain I was wearing my best “deer in the headlights” look on my face. I resurfaced long enough from my overwhelm stupor to ask Dr. Borst a question. “Could I postpone the surgery for two weeks?” His reassuring response was, “Absolutely. I always want my patients to feel as much in charge of their process as they can.” I felt validated by his words and appreciated his respectful demeanor. It gave me a sense of security having such a caring, professional partner working with me toward my recovery. We rescheduled the surgery to Wednesday, December 4, 2013.

After the initial meeting with Dr. Borst, I came away with immense gratitude for my fledgling support team. I soon realized, as I plummeted down the cancer rabbit hole, I needed their support in myriad ways. I required help in remembering what the doctor and his staff told me, aid in interpreting all the medical jargon, and being able to comprehend the impact of the doctor's words. (Thank you, Lisa. for your beautiful and loving expertise.) From thereon, like troopers, they accompanied me to every appointment. I so welcomed and appreciated my good fortune to have such a loving, caring, supportive team.

Surgery! Never in my life had I ever had open-up-the-area-of-my-vital-organs surgery. I had had a partial hip replacement, and a fractured elbow surgery—but nothing of this magnitude. The uncertainties were many. Until surgery, it was unknown how many tumors there were, or their exact location, or how invasive the cancer had become. What post-surgical recovery involved, I had no clue. I assumed I was not going to feel like Super Woman. (I was correct on that one!)

Chemo?

Radiation?

Many questions—much uncertainty.

Two Weeks of Intensive Scrambling

After the agreed upon surgery reprieve, I dove in and took immediate action to close up my business. I wanted to have everything on my massive task list accomplished within this narrow two-week window. Business dealings had to be completed. Partnership legalities and bank accounts were closed. It took paperwork and more paperwork to get everything into order. The two weeks prior to surgery were filled with a flurry of business decision-making activities that kept me focused on the here and now. I spent the rest of my time in meditation directing my energies towards healing my body. (In retrospect, it was a good choice I made to ask for the two weeks. Once I began chemo, I became unable to take care of any business dealings.)

Thanksgiving was ten days after my initial appointment with Dr. Borst. It was bittersweet as it was the first major family holiday at which my son was not present. What a deep, grief-filled hole it was for us, magnified by my transition to something none of us comprehended. Would I be here to celebrate next

year's Thanksgiving? I sensed this possibility hanging uppermost in everyone's minds and hearts that day. We did our best to focus upon and rely on our family love and strength. We centered on celebrating the bounty in our lives. We celebrated with generous amounts of delicious food, family connection, humor, and love. I felt filled to the brim with all the love, the comfort food, and the most precious gratitude for life.

Next: Down the Before-Cancer-Surgery Rabbit Hole