

We all remember dates.... birthday, anniversary, 1st date, and so on. Breast cancer survivors have so many more dates that they remember. Here's my story:

On August 25, 2015 I found a lump in my right breast. I had just turned 45 and hadn't even had my first mammogram. I didn't want one unless I HAD to but this was that time. I told my husband and he turned as ghost white as a person can get while still breathing. I called my GYN's office (Dr. Shull) and they worked me in the following day. Dr. Shull agreed that I needed a mammogram. August 27th I had the mammogram and then was told I needed to get an ultrasound as well (here is where the panic set in). I assumed that I would be sent on my way after the ultrasound was finished but I was told that the radiologist needed to speak with me. When I walked into the radiologist's office, I saw multiple computer monitors with a starburst shape shown from many angles. I was told there was some concern and that I needed a biopsy. That was all I remember hearing. I knew he was still talking but I could not take my eyes off the monitors. As I stood to leave, the ultrasound tech walked me out and recommended a fantastic surgeon, Dr. Valle. Not five minutes after I had gotten into my car, my phone rings and it was Dr. Shull; not Shull's nurse, but Shull himself. I told him that Dr. Valle was recommended and he agreed that he would be the one to see. I called my husband, I was in tears and shaking...bless his heart, he was too far away to hurry home but we both shared that awkward silence and then agreed we just needed to try to be positive.

September 2, 2015 I had the biopsy and was told it would take a few days for results. Just before 6 p.m. on September 3rd, Dr. Valle's office called and said they needed to see me the next morning. I told his assistant that it had to be cancer or she wouldn't be calling to say they needed to see me. I urged her to tell me over the phone. She said, "Mrs. Taylor, you have stage I cancer but Dr. Valle is very confident that you will be just fine". My first thoughts were: "How could I have cancer?" I didn't have time for it. I had a 5-year-old son and had only been married for 8 years. I had too much living to do! My mind took me to my friends that were battling breast cancer as well. I had seen what my friends had gone through and was scared to think I would have to go through it.

My husband and I met with Valle the next day to discuss "what's next". Once we left the surgeons office, we had to make the dreaded phone calls to family and close friends. The hardest words I have ever uttered were, "I have cancer" to my mother and my sister. I had my "fall apart" for about a day and realized it was not going to change my situation. *I had cancer, it didn't have me.* The next few

weeks were filled with various appointments with genetic counseling (I have a twin sister), oncology consults, and an MRI.

October 15, 2015 was my lumpectomy and it went off without a hitch. You can't even really see my scar either. It was determined that I would not need chemo but I would have to take a pill for the next 5 years and that I would go through 4 weeks of radiation. Let me tell you, my oncologists Dr. Womack (medical) and Dr. Whaley (rad) were so fantastic. January 13, 2016 I got to ring the bell. I was done with treatment!

The past year has been such a whirlwind ride and my husband was right there to ride it with me. I'm lucky. I had a bit of "survivor's guilt" when my good friend passed in March 2016 because in my eyes, SHE was the strong one but she was fighting a much harder battle than I had to. I have finally found it within myself to call myself a "survivor" after all of my other titles of wife, mother, daughter, friend.