

Deciding to go flat. I don't see scars, I see the recovery, the journey, the love.
Kate Scurlock
October 2017

My breast cancer journey began eighteen years ago. I found a small lump after a self check. After my diagnosis, I had a lumpectomy followed by a lengthy treatment regime of radiation. I experienced radiation burns about halfway through the treatments and had to stop and heal before I was able to complete the visits. Things were so different then compared to now. No cancer center, no nurse navigator, no Go Pink, No Komen Race here, and no on staff oncologist. My how things have changed!

So I recovered, had my yearly diagnostic mammograms, and life went on. After cancer it is frightening to have the yearly screening but after five years of clean films I began to relax a little more each year.

Fast forward to early November of 2015. It was time for my yearly mammogram. After it was done I was asked to speak to the radiologist and informed that there was reason for concern. I had an ultrasound that day. She felt that a biopsy was the next step and it was scheduled for a week later. It was a long agonizing wait for the results. And I began to contemplate the very real possibility that I was going to go through this journey again.

The day before Thanksgiving I received the news. This was a different more invasive type of cancer in the same breast as before. Due to previous radiation I only had the option of a mastectomy. I chose to have both breasts removed to prevent the chance of a third cancer diagnosis.

There are, at this point, so many decisions to make. So much research to do. The all important task of choosing a surgeon, and of course the huge very personal decision of breast reconstruction versus going breast free. Going breast free or "flat" as some call it is a relatively low percentage around 20%. Because of the decision to go "flat" it was critical for me to find a surgeon who supported this less common road. It is a different surgery and for me the recovery was and still is challenging. I had genetic testing due to family history. Through these tests it was determined that I would not have to go through the rigors of chemotherapy. One of my reasons for gratitude. My surgery was performed on January 7, 2016. I had another surgery on Dec 12, 2016.

I decided, after recovering somewhat from surgery, that I would share my scars and flatness with any of my women friends who were curious about how it looked and what all it involved. I am very pleased and proud that I have been able to share this with many of my dear friends. Perhaps by sharing it has erased some of the stigma and mystery that evolves around going flat.

As I have slowly adjusted to the "new me". I have realized that attitude, faith, strength, and even humor are very important to me. When I look in the mirror I look beyond all the scars and I see the recovery, the journey, and the strong link that I have to women and men, young and old, every race and walk of life because Breast Cancer Knows No Boundaries. I feel this invisible

connection, and I try to send my love and strength to my fellow heroes and survivors no matter where they may be on their journey.

I am so grateful to my daughter, my sisters, my family and my friends for the love and support that continues to be shown to me.

Daily Gratitude. That is what I will continue to practice for the rest of my days.

Thank you for allowing me to share my story.