

# SHARING MY STORY

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Leaving Choate Rosemary Hall in 1975 was hard. Although my academic record did not fully reflect it, I took away with me great lessons in friendship, love, and persistence. I ended up in Canada, my mother's country of birth, attending university and carrying on with my theatre training. Bishop's University is a small university in the beautiful Eastern Townships region of Quebec. I lived in the area for 10 years, schooling, working in theatre and birthing my two daughters, Alta and Cordelia.

In 1984, I moved to Toronto with my new husband, Steve. We set up our ready-made family of four in the big city, a far cry from the quiet surroundings of Quebec. Like all families with young children, we worked and organized activities around the girls. I have kept a journal since 1985 and sometimes when I dare to look at the pages from long ago, I marvel at how incredibly busy we all were. We did all the things families do, attended school concerts and events, ballet recitals and Brownie rituals. Although our life was blessed in so many ways, there was nothing at all remarkable about it. We got up, went to school or work, played, went to bed and started all over the next day. But of course now I know that remarkable things can happen.

In June 1990, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. At the time, as with all life altering events, I was stunned and shocked. I was only



33, I was healthy and it was cancer! You think being stuck in traffic is the worst thing that can happen and then God laughs.

Over the next five months, I was up and I was down. I had surgery and blood tests and scans and radiation. I received excellent care and spent some time after mulling over the

whole experience. And what I have found over the past 15 years is that we all have remarkable experiences—diagnoses of chronic or life-threatening illnesses; the death of spouses, children parents, siblings or close friends; divorce—all events which connect us in our humanness. I used to believe that bad things only happened to other people and that I would be immune but I learned that bad things happen to all of us. It is just a part of life.

I volunteered in the breast cancer community for a few years counseling newly diagnosed women and I would often hear them apologize to me for crying or being upset. I always asked them what a counselor had asked me, "Why don't you think you should cry when your whole world is falling apart?" They never had a good answer for me, which was the point. It is the *best* time to cry and be upset.

To be honest, I used to dread reading the news in alumni magazines. My life was kind of crazy and everyone else sounded so together, successful, happy, rich, famous and perfect. But at the reunions, which I have attended every five years, my classmates and friends have shared their stories and I know that much more than just graduating from Choate Rosemary Hall connects us all.

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