

Loving Yourself Through Cancer

*A Journey of
Hope and Inspiration*

Carol Rosebrough

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my loving and beautiful children, Suzanne Hill, John Rosebrough, Rebecca Kuper, their devoted spouses, my grandchildren Ethan Hill, Lindsay Hill, Noah Kuper and our future descendants.

My children overcame a most difficult childhood after the sudden death of their father when they were only 11, 9 and 6 years of age. Through all the trials, tribulations, traumas and heartache while we built a new life without him, we grew together and our love and support for one another have never wavered.

I think my children are amazing beings and parents. They are creating new cycles and breaking old ones to provide a better life and foundation for their children than any of us ever had. I'm honored to be their mother and witness their personal growth. I look forward to their positive influence on future generations.



*I believe that expressing
gratitude daily
multiplies the abundance
in our lives.*



In appreciation ...

To my parents, Bessie and Lindsey Belville, who brought me into this world as their last child together at the ages of 42 and 45. Now that I know their backgrounds, I believe they did the very best they could for me and truly never meant me any harm ... especially my mother.

To John Rutledge "Jack" Rosebrough, my high school sweetheart, knight in shining armor and husband of 14 years until his sudden death at the age of 36. Jack is the first person in my life who made me feel safe. He gave me unwavering love, and we had three loving and beautiful children together.

To Elsy and John H. Rosebrough (Mimi and Pop) and Bill and Tom Rosebrough, Jack's parents and two younger brothers. This entire family unanimously adopted me as their daughter and sister from the time I was a teenager. Even though Jack has been dead for 40 years, and Mimi and Pop dead for many as well, I remain the beloved sister of Bill and Tom. Mimi served as a surrogate mother to me when I had none. She never knew I was cheated out of my own family's inheritance, but at her death, she lovingly left her meager inheritance to Bill, Tom and me ... equally. I, in turn, shared Mimi's gift equally with my children.

To Eugene A. "Gene" Cuticchia, the first and most important mentor of my life. Gene became my boss at United Cerebral Palsy of Columbus and Franklin County on the day Jack died. That very morning I received my first promotion and raise, from secretary to administrative assistant. Over the

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eight years we worked together, Gene was a wonderful role model. He saw me, my potential, totally supported my personal and professional growth and taught me to look within for the answers to my life. His presence was life altering for me, in a most positive way, and for that I will be eternally grateful. Because of his influence, I developed the courage, skills and heart to build the dream life I live today.

To David W. "Dave" Metz, who risked hiring me as the Division Business Manager for Times Mirror Cable Television, Inc. ... my first job in cable. That started my career which spanned 24 years, four companies, two states and helped me build the retirement plan which supports me financially today.

To James D. "Jim" Munchel, who risked retaining me as the general manager of the cable system I managed in Pennsylvania when his parent company, Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff, became the third owner. Jim had a general manager in Rhode Island, already working for him, who was expecting to replace me when her position was eliminated at the closing of the sale. Instead Jim retained me. Over the ten years we worked together, Jim's support for me was endless. My territory was quadrupled, he promoted me to the vice president level and the company recognized me with many awards, including nominating and supporting me as a participant in the industry's prestigious Betsy Magness Leadership Institute.

To Swami Shantanand "Shantji" Saraswati, a loving and devoted friend, ever since we met in Pennsylvania in 1990. Born, raised and educated in Allahabad, India he now shares

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his time between his Ashram on the Ganges River in Allahabad and his home and Shanti Temple in Montrose, Pennsylvania. Shantji also has a cave in India where he lived many years honing his beliefs and where he discovered his philosophy of the *Wisdom of Non Doing*. He promotes living a regulated life and living with truth on all levels in your life.

To Jeannetta Holliman, the founder of the International Women's Writing Guild regional chapter in central Ohio, and the founder and creator of the Gillie Writers Workshop. Jeannetta has given me personal support and encouragement of my writing. She used her creativity and publishing skills to take the Gillie writers on a journey ... a writing journey. And together, 15 of very diverse and ordinary senior women created and published an anthology entitled ... *Works in Process: Women Over 50 Reflecting*. This was my first experience with a formal book launch, reading and reception. It was great fun to experience this celebration with all the contributing authors. After the reading I felt like a celebrity when guests asked for my signature for their books!

To Jeanne Marlowe, the current International Women's Writing Guild regional coordinator for central Ohio. Jeanne has always offered me support, encouraged my writing and introduced me to Jeannetta.

To the doctors who have helped me navigate the healing of my body to excellent health: Dr. Wendy Sparling, my personal physician, who manages my health care on a regular basis and refers me to specialists; Dr. Jason Barfield, my neurologist, who manages my post stroke care; Dr.

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Ramona Nixon, my dermatologist; Dr. George Calloway, Jr., the ophthalmologist who referred me to Dr. Gallo; Dr. Samuel Gallo, an eye and facial plastic surgeon, who biopsied and diagnosed my lymphoma cancer; Dr. Mark Davanzo, a general surgeon, who surgically implanted my port needed for chemotherapy infusions; Dr. Taral Patel, my oncology specialist, and all the other medical and administrative staff at The Mark H. Zangmeister Center, who have and continue to expertly guide me through the maze of chemotherapy and healing. My cancer treatment could have been a scary and lonely process, but instead I have always felt welcome, cared about and safe working with everyone at Zangmeister.

To every person and organization dedicated to curing and eliminating cancer, and those working every day to heal patients with cancer. Critical cancer research leads to technological and medical improvements in diagnosis and treatment. Continuous improvement in treatment results in more people not only surviving a cancer diagnosis and treatment, but going on to live a full and healthy life.

Foreword

"You have cancer." Words no one wants to hear. Carol Rosebrough's book, *Loving Yourself Through Cancer*, takes us through her journey of hearing and responding to this diagnosis. More specifically, DECIDING how to respond to the cancer diagnosis. Even more importantly, it helps us understand some truths that can help us live more fulfilled, healthier, happier, and empowered lives. These lessons are important whether or not we have had a diagnosis of cancer:

--"I forgive you." When sincere, these words are very powerful. Carol shows that when we are able to let go of things that hurt us (the process of forgiving), we are then free to heal and grow. She reminds us that forgiving does not mean we condone or forget the wrong that was done; however, it does mean that the wrong we forgive no longer has any power over us, our attitude, decisions, or responses. We become free to realize that we alone are fully responsible and can take charge of our decisions, time, health, spiritual well-being, finances, and happiness. She also reminds us that sometimes we need to forgive ourselves for things that we've done or decisions we've made in the past.

--"I'm grateful." Our attitude is so important when it comes to being as healthy as we can. Throughout this book, Carol shows us that we can find the positive lessons and learn when life throws things at us that we sometimes only want to react to as negative experiences. Even a journey through cancer treatment can make us stronger, happier, more fulfilled people. We learn that we have a lot for which to be grateful. God does send us many blessings but sometimes

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we miss feeling blessed due to our attitude. We fail to reap the benefits because we only perceive the event (diagnosis, accident, etc) as negative and react to it as such.

--Carol proves to us that we can change our health, habits, circumstances, etc at any age. We cannot use the excuse of "it is too late" to change for the better. As a physician, I especially like Carol's healthy approach to weight management ... not a "diet" but a "permanent lifestyle change." Almost anyone can be very successful with this approach. I hope perhaps a cookbook or some recipes online are in her future! This book helps us to understand that our relationship with our bodies is "until death do us part" and inspires us to take better care of the earthly shell which we are dependent on until death.

This book is inspiring in so many ways. It can help us face adversities in a positive, grateful, healthy way. We learn to focus on what we can do to help ourselves versus being victims of our circumstances. I wish that I could have read this book before I had to deal with my own cancer diagnosis and many other "curveballs" that life has thrown. It offers valuable tools for adults of all ages to use to come out of life's challenges as more fulfilled, more empowered, happier, and healthier people.

Dr. Wendy L. Miller-Sparling
Sunbury Square Family Medicine

Introduction

There is no such thing as a "one size fits all" response to a cancer diagnosis. Quite the opposite in fact. Each person receiving a diagnosis of cancer is different; their life experiences are different, their particular cancer is different, the condition of their body is different, the stage of their cancer is different, their treatment is different and their emotional and physical response to the cancer and treatment will be different.

Cancer is quite mysterious actually. There is no warning for it and there is no blanket vaccine against it. And cancer does not discriminate. It crosses all boundaries of race, gender, age and socio-economic status.

Cancer research has come a long way. With the advances continually made in research, odds are improved every day for people to heal their specific cancer and never have it return. Perhaps one day research will be able to eliminate cancer completely, or at least eliminate any deaths occurring as a result of it.

This book, *Loving Yourself Through Cancer*, is an outgrowth of my diagnosis of an incurable, slow growing lymphoma cancer and my healing process. It has been a transformational experience for me to write this book concurrently as I've been going through my own chemotherapy treatment.

Because I believe there are no accidents and there is a lesson to be learned from every event that happens, I approached

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my cancer diagnosis from the beginning looking for whatever lessons there might be for me. I was also able to incorporate and use personal growth and healing tools that I have developed over the past decades to help and guide me.

All my healing tools and the lessons I learned while going through the cancer diagnosis and chemotherapy treatment process are included in this book. One lesson, previously learned, became solidified for me and another lesson has catapulted me to an entirely new level of existence.

Writing is therapy for me. Definitely writing about my diagnosis and treatment of cancer has been healing for me personally. Accepting, appreciating, loving and taking care of my body is my lesson that became solidified during this process. My surprise lesson was that writing this book evolved into a "coming out" for me in sharing the shame and secrets of my past.

My hope now is that my story, truthfully shared in this book, will inspire others to accept, appreciate, love and take care of their bodies as well as to share their stories. It is only what is hidden that can keep us prisoners. A diagnosis of cancer is a call to heal oneself. Look within. Forgive. Heal. Grow. Become your very best self and live the life of your dreams.

Carol Rosebrough

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*I believe just one person,
acting with kindness and love,
can shift the world.*



Chapter 1

What do you mean I have cancer?

I'm sitting in a black leather examining chair ready for an eye exam. It is quite similar to Dr. Calloway's office, the ophthalmologist who referred me to this specialist in eye and facial plastic surgery. I've never met with a plastic surgeon before, and I wonder what it will be like ... and more importantly what I'll find out about this lump under my left lower eyelid.

The door opens, and Dr. Gallo enters the room with an assistant. His smile is so big and energetic, it's contagious. It feels good to be here.

"Well, Carol, what brings you here to see us today?" he asks me.

"I have a lump under my left eyelid that I've had for quite a while. Dr. Sparling, my personal physician, at first thought it was a clogged duct. But when I started experiencing some double vision she referred me to Dr. Calloway, an ophthalmologist.

When he examined me he said he thought it was a fatty deposit, but he could also see that my left eye was tilting upward. He thought the lump was probably causing my vision problems. He said that my eyes were actually healthy,

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and since his specialty was inside the eye, I needed to see someone with a specialty for outside the eye. So, that's the long version of why I'm here to see you today. Dr. Calloway referred me to you."

Dr. Gallo moves closer to me, starts feeling the lump, comparing my left lower eyelid area to my right, moves back, chats with his assistant a moment and then returns to me. "Well, I don't know what it is, but it isn't a fatty deposit. It mimics one, and is probably benign, but it should be removed, if possible, or at least I need to get a slice for a biopsy. If you're agreeable, I would like to schedule you for surgery right away to find out what this is."

"Of course, I want to know, too," I reply.

Dr. Gallo did say he thought it was benign, right? I can't have cancer. I've spent decades cleaning up and healing my past, living a spiritual life, being responsible, harming no one, and living with love, kindness and compassion for others. This will be benign for sure.

Surgery is on an outpatient basis. While I'm still in the recovery area, the normally energetic and smiling Dr. Gallo approaches me a little somberly. "I couldn't remove the lump. It was too close to the eye to remove without damaging critical eye muscles, but I did get a slice for a biopsy. It looks funny though. I think it's some low level form of lymphoma that can probably be treated with a few radiation treatments. We'll know for sure when the biopsy results are completed."

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My first shock wave. No results for sure, but Dr. Gallo is preparing me to hear a diagnosis of cancer. Again, I'm in disbelief. Surely he is wrong and the diagnosis will come back as benign. Of course I'm in denial of what is happening to me.

Monica, the director of nursing, who has been caring for me pre and post op knows I want to know the results as quickly as possible, and she even offers to call me with the results over the weekend, if they are available. Unfortunately they aren't and I have to wait several days for her personal phone call to me with the results.

I'm expecting a benign diagnosis, so her call dashes my spirits. "Hello Carol, Dr. Gallo's visual diagnosis during surgery was correct. I wish it were wrong, but he's gifted in this way and usually right. The biopsy confirms the lump in your left orbit is B Cell Lymphoma. Your follow up visit with the doctor is tomorrow, and he can talk to you then about your options and next steps." I can feel Monica's concern and compassion for me as she continues ... "I'm sorry. You take care and we'll see you tomorrow."

My second shock wave. I do have cancer! But why? What does this mean? What am I supposed to learn from this? I'm still having trouble comprehending this is even a possibility of happening to me, let alone it is actually happening to me!

Unfortunately I'm not finished with the layers of shock I will experience as I enter this world of cancer, beginning with my follow up visit with Dr. Gallo to hear his recommendations.

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Here I am again, in the same room and chair as in my first visit. But I'm no longer the naive person with no cancer. *At least it's only in my eye, right? And a few treatments of radiation will take it away, right?*

Then Dr. Gallo enters the room, back to his normal energetic and smiling self. He goes over the diagnosis again, reaffirming that a few treatments of radiation should clear it up. He also advises me that I can go to Ohio State or The Zangmeister Center for treatment and that I will receive the same level of care at either place. It's just a matter of convenience and where I would prefer to go for treatment.

Then comes the next shock, when he says "They'll want to do a full body scan to find out if this is anywhere else in your body."

That thought never occurred to me. Now I don't have just a cancer lump contained in my left eye orbit that can be treated with a few treatments of radiation, it could be anywhere throughout my body! I have had this lump a really long time. Maybe it has already spread everywhere throughout my body. *What would that mean for treatment? Chemotherapy? I have heard nothing but horror stories about what people experience in chemotherapy. Again, what on earth does all this mean to me? How in the world do I process it?*

My denial shifts into some fear ... fear of the unknown and what I am about to experience. I have no frame of reference to know what to expect. I haven't even had the experience of a close friend going through cancer to be able to grasp it.

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What I do have, however, is an unwavering belief that anything that happens always works for my highest good, a belief that I know will sustain me throughout this experience. I'm always looking for the silver lining. Always looking for what I need to learn. Always looking for the message or the lesson.