

New 2002 Waves of Hope



Dawn Williams

Dawn was born in Cape Town, South Africa in 1946 and married Karl in June 1970. They immigrated to Canada in 1971 as newlyweds, to start a new life away from apartheid. Imagine, landing in a place like Brandon, Manitoba, which they could not even find on the map. Needless to say many tears were shed by Dawn when they arrived here as she was homesick for the ocean, the mountains and the big city life. They decided to give it a one year trial, and here they are years later, still living in good old Brandon. They do not have any kids.

Dawn worked for Drs. Povah, Davloor, Decter, Gunston from 1972 to 1992 and thereafter joined Westman Lab as a medical secretary in the Pathology Department from 1992 to present.

Her hobbies include travel (especially in the winter months away from the cold), spending time at the cottage at Pelican Lake, water sports, reading, cooking and going for long walks with her "Lovie".

In June 2002, Dawn was sitting at her desk and felt as if someone had put a knife into her breast. She lifted up her blouse to do a BSE which totally stunned her co-worker at the next desk. It was then that she found the lump. She went for a mammogram and ultrasound within days and they both came back negative. Dawn then underwent a core biopsy on June 28, 2002 which gave a diagnosis of lobular hyperplasia, but as the lump was still present the Chief Pathologist, Dr. Taylor, advised that it be removed. Dr. Myers was of the opinion that it was only lobular hyperplasia and could just be watched for six months but on Dr. Taylor's recommendation and her insistence Dawn went on to open biopsy on July 30, 2002. Well, what do you know, it was an infiltrating lobular carcinoma, what a shock. A lumpectomy followed on August 26, 2002 with axillary dissection. She underwent six weeks of radiation from December 1 to January 20, 2003. Dawn was initially put on tamoxifen from September to March but had to discontinue due to transient blindness in her right eye as well as dizzy spells. They thought she was maybe having mini strokes due to the tamoxifen, which caused the blindness and dizziness. She was therefore switched to arimidex. After completing the radiation Karl took Dawn to Barbados for two months (February and March) to recuperate in the sun. It was a wonderful break and great to get away from the trauma of the diagnosis, surgery and treatment of the past few months. Dawn has no family history of breast cancer, so she says, "I guess you could say I started the history."

"This diagnosis has certainly changed my life. It has given me a different outlook and I now live each day to the fullest. I appreciate my family and friends more and find I am more tolerant of people in general. Joining the Waves of Hope has certainly been a positive experience in my life. If it can be said that something good came out of something bad, then I would have to say that belonging to the group has been a plus. I have made so many new friends in such a short time. I value the friendship and support offered by the group and also the exercise obtained from the paddling. You sure are a gutsy group of women who give me lots of hope and courage that even though we have a diagnosis of breast cancer, we will overcome and continue to live long, happy and cancer-free lives. Keep on paddling "Waves of Hope" in the true "Kindred Spirit" fashion."