

Sue Morey's Journal Excerpts

October 28, 2004



While waiting in the pre-op room before surgery, I felt a headache coming on. The nurse asked how I was feeling. When I mentioned the headache, she asked if I usually drank coffee in the morning. I said no—I gave up all caffeine years ago so I wouldn't get breast cancer. She laughed, and I did, too. I did everything right—breastfed four children, never smoked, maintained a healthy weight. There is no history of breast cancer in my family, and here I am. I guess it's healthier to laugh at the absurdity of it all than to rage and make myself sicker.

December 25, 2004

It's Christmas night and I am bald. When I was blow-drying my hair this morning, I noticed a lot of hair coming out on the brush and my hand. For an instant I wondered what was happening, and then I realized my hair was starting to fall out. How could I have forgotten about this? I have been feeling OK, looking forward to Christmas and just not thinking about my hair. And it happened today, of all days! I told Skip I wanted him to shave my head, but he was reluctant. He thought I should just let it fall out. After everyone opened their gifts, Kirsten, Gerald and the boys went to Gerald's family for Christmas dinner. We were invited, but I didn't feel up to it. Too many people with too many germs. I have to be extra careful since I'm on chemo. When they came home in the evening, I told Kirsten my hair was falling out, and I just wanted to shave it off. "It doesn't look too bad," she said, touching my head. A clump of hair stuck to her hand. "Oh," she said. We both laughed. Ever the counselor, she asked me if I wanted to talk about it. "It might be shocking to lose your hair all at once." I said I did not want to deal with hair falling out all over the place, and I wanted to just take charge and shave it all off. It is really important to me to feel like I am in control of something, instead of just waiting for it to happen to me. "OK, let's do it," she said.



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I sat on the stool the boys use when Gerald cuts their hair. They wanted to watch the process, which was fine with me. They are old enough to see what happens to people who have chemotherapy. Skip got out the clippers and buzzed my head—methodically, section by section. I watched the clumps of hair fall on the white tile floor. There was still a bit of fuzz left in several places, so Gerald got out his clippers, which shave really close, and he went over my head again. The boys continued to sit there and encourage me. Jarell said I have a great shaped head and looked cool bald. He thought I looked younger. Jordan said I just needed some really big earrings. Gerald decided I looked like Sigourney Weaver in Alien. (Just so I don't look like Emma Thompson in Wit.) Kirsten talked about neat ways to wear a scarf. What would I do without their encouragement? When Gerald was finished, he handed me a mirror and I was shocked to see the face of my brother Tim looking back at me. I will have to send him a photo. We always joked about how much we look alike. Wait till he sees me now. Poor Skip seemed more upset than I was. I have never been vain about my hair, so it's not that big a deal for me. I know it will grow back, and for now I won't have to deal with coloring or styling, which I never liked doing anyhow. I hope it comes back white and curly. Kirsten and I plan to go shopping the day after tomorrow. Maybe I'll take Jordan's suggestion and buy some big earrings.



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