

## Silver Linings

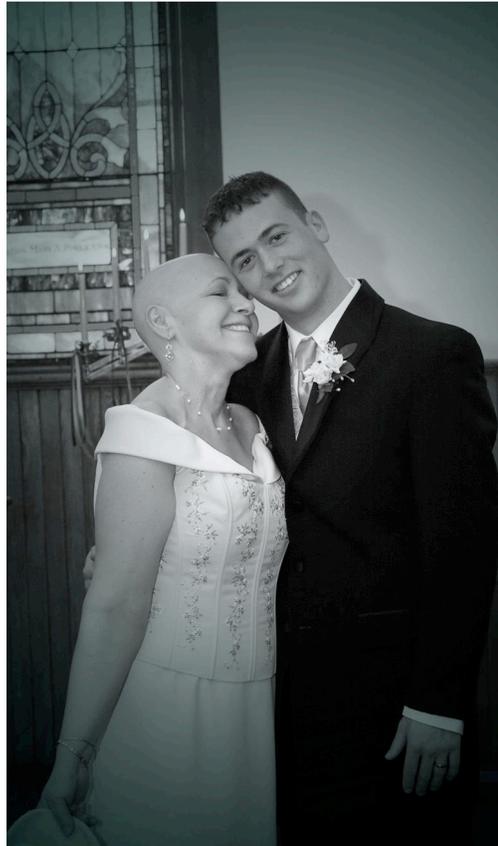
BY ALLYN RISHEL

When Pathfinder's founder Tina Staley approached me to write an article for The Pathfinders Journey, I thought I should mention how the program helped me. Instead I should explain what this program means to me. It is a much needed bridge between the emotional and medical aspect of a cancer diagnoses.

The power of positive thinking has long been a weapon in my arsenal as I battle cancer. Looking for 'silver linings', using my inherited sense of humor and deep desire for creativity has really helped me.

The Pathfinders Program is a grass roots effort to illustrate the effectiveness of these and many other mental weapons. During my tenure as a cancer victor, many support groups I've attended have stopped short of what this program is accomplishing. So I say, "Go for it Pathfinders and use your collective information to help as many people as possible!" After all, cancer is no longer a death sentence, but is gradually becoming just a chronic illness. Many people will live a long time with cancer and need your help.

My personal journey started 37 years ago when I was 14 and diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease. After lengthy radiation treatments and a spleen removal I was given a hopeful outlook for the future.



"Yes,  
I danced at  
the wedding.  
Never give up  
on those  
'silver linings'."

— Allyn pictured  
above with her  
son, Matthew

During the following years I met my husband, and had two perfect sons, Darrell and Matthew. One night in 1988 my husband and I discovered a lump in my right breast. At that time I had a growing career in the banking industry, my children were 3 and 11 and life was grand for a young couple in their 30s. The mammography confirmed our fears; somewhere in the back of our minds we had braced ourselves for a secondary cancer.

So, at 31, I embarked on my profession as a breast cancer survivor. Since my diagnoses of breast cancer, I have had chemo twice, radiation many times, every hormone treatment available, a lumpectomy, a bi-lateral mastectomy, reconstruction; I have worked on fundraisers, been in support groups and developed many friendships. In 2000, we discovered that the breast cancer had moved to my bones. I have been living in stage 4 for 8 beautiful, fun-filled years.

Something that I have felt all along is that, 'Attitude is Key' and 'You've got to accentuate the positive.' The best weapons we have for life's battles are spirituality, self-awareness and positive relationships. Pathfinders is providing proof that these weapons are making a medical difference. I wish to say, "Thank you to all those who support these efforts."

My children? I'm glad you asked. Our 11-year-old is now 30, he lives in Louisville with his wife, Leslie and our 2 grandchildren, Alex and Adam. My 3-year-old, Matthew, is now 23 and got married last year.