

Local woman shares her cancer experiences

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 hair, she is an inspiration to me.”
 Losing her hair is just one of the side effects Mrs. Wall knows she likely will face. “I just try to think about it in these terms: I have the most awful hair; it’s thin and fine, and what I eventually grow back has to be better than what I have now. If I go bald, do I get a good wig? Do I get something close to what I have now, or do I go wild and get the kind of hair I’ve always wanted but never had?”

Mrs. Wall said her husband of 18 years, Clifford, has been very supportive. “He is an absolute rock. We have cried together, and I know he has gone outside to talk to God and done some crying on his own.”

Wall works out of town for long stretches of time, and he is thankful his wife has numerous friends and family members she can rely on in his absence.

“I will be going through a lot of treatments while he’s gone, but my church family [Lampasas Baptist Church] and friends in the community are helping me, and they have offered to take me to appointments and treatments. Whatever I need, they are there. They have brought food, they send cards, and they are always phoning and checking on me. It has been a tremendous outpouring of love, and we are very grateful and very fortunate.”

Beginning this week, she is receiving the chemotherapy drugs Adriamycin (nicknamed “the red devil” by nurses, she said) and Cytoxan at St. David’s Hospital in Georgetown. They are administered

through the catheter implanted in her chest at 21-day intervals for four total treatments.

That will be followed by Taxol each week for 12 weeks. “When I get the Taxol it will seem like a piece of cake compared to what my first chemo treatments will be,” she said.

Several anti-nausea medications also have been prescribed to combat the sickness that usually accompanies chemo treatments.

Radiation will be the next course of action.

In all, Mrs. Wall will undergo about six months of cancer treatments. “They treat it very aggressively to kill any possible cancer cells,” she said.

Mrs. Wall said she looks at things differently than she did before her cancer diagnosis. “I didn’t know I had this many friends and people who care. I appreciate things more now. Everything changes; your focus changes, and you think more about what is really important and what is just junk.”

“I know where I’m going when I die, and my family can go on and be strong. We are going to get through this together and keep a positive outlook and weed out all the negativity. We don’t need that, and we don’t want to dwell on the negatives.”

Mrs. Wall knows many women have faced cancer before her and in much worse circumstances. “I’m not the only one to go through this, and there are women out there who have it so much worse than I do. I

also know nowadays it’s not necessarily a death sentence. There have been so many advances in the fight against cancer.”

And she believes doctors need to be more proactive in directing women on doing self-breast exams. “I think so many women are not sure what they are looking for or what to do when they think they may have found something.”

Mrs. Wall said she was outraged after a recent government report stated women don’t need mammograms before age 50.

“Women need to be vigilant in their care. Imagine if I had waited until I was 50 to get a mammogram. Imagine if so many other women were to wait. That doesn’t make sense. A woman needs to have a mammogram every year beginning at age 40, and if they have a history of breast cancer, they need to start at 35. I wouldn’t listen to the government’s advice on this one. They are way off base,” she said.

“Mammograms may not be 100 percent accurate, but without the test where would I be now? Where would a lot of women be now?”

Prior to her lumpectomy and catheter installation at Rollins Brook, Mrs. Wall said she had prepared mentally for the surgery and the findings.

“My favorite Bible verse is 2 Corinthians 12:9. I printed that on a sticky note and stuck it to my breast, and when they got ready to do the surgery, the nurses opened my gown and found it there, and they laughed with me. You’ve got to

find the humor in everything. You just have to.”

Looking toward the future, Mrs. Wall said her cancer diagnosis has convinced her how important it is to make each moment count. “I know this might seem ridiculous because millions of women have been cured, but it does make me look at things differently. Cancer is an ugly word. And you have to find ways to deal with it. I do that with my family, my church and my friends.”

Improvements in diagnosis and treatment have saved a lot of lives, she said. “And I have a lot to look forward to. I have my husband, my three boys and a grandbaby. I have lots of close and caring friends and family.”

“I just have to get through these treatments. They are a short, minor inconvenience in my life, but then I will get my life back. God has been good to me,” she said. “I still feel very fortunate, and I believe there’s a future in my future. That’s what I’m reaching toward.”

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Library storytime
 A “Winter Wonderland” preschool storytime is Dec. 16 from 10-10:30 a.m. at the Lampasas Public Library.

Correction
 In Friday’s edition, a story about Precinct 4 Justice of the Peace Sheila Hood contained an incorrect date. Walter Prugh retired as justice of the peace Oct. 31, 2005, and on Nov. 1, 2005, Mrs. Hood began to fill Prugh’s unexpired term.

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