

Let me tell you a little bit about how I got here from there. Well, I took Sunset highway, came up through Airway Heights and... No, really, I am surprised and honored to have been chosen to represent so many of you survivors out there, who all have their stories to tell.

First, let me tell you a little bit about me. I'd like to make this part brief. Not because I don't like talking about myself, but that's not what it's about today. My name is Daynee Noelani Charbonneau. When I instructed Aerobics, I would teach my name this way: DAY (point outside) and KNEE (point to joint). I've found that people learn better from a word picture rather than a funny name. My middle name is Noelani, after a Hawaiian princess, (it means Heavenly white mist). I was born there in a pink hospital and have luckily loved the color ever since. I picked my last name out of a phone book after a divorce, settling on Charbonneau. It sounded good. So, for all of you Charbonneaus out there, don't worry, were not related, by blood. Of course, if there is anyone needing to leave an inheritance, I would be happy to oblige

I have taken my own path most of my life, just because it feels right. I have played many roles and received a lot of fulfillment and acquired a lot of "character, if you know what I mean. I have been a daughter, sister, mother aunt, grandmother and who knows what else. I became an Aerobics/ Personal weight trainer, a horse-trainer and racetrack coach, liason for the Miss USA pageant, a radio personality in Hollywood, an actress, Director of Marketing for the YMCA, Residential Facilitator, teacher, Activities Director and world traveler. All of these roles have brought me to the biggest role I've had to learn from so far...that of Cancer Survivor.

Although my world had blown up into a whirlwind, I decided I would bring as much humor into the announcement as possible as I shared my diagnosis with family and friends. I armed myself with jokes to disarm those who became my biggest supporters. When talking to my brother about it, he said to me, "Well, keep me... and I finished with "A breast"? He didn't think it was funny, but I did. Humor is a great icebreaker and it helped keep my and others spirits up, because they would respond in kind or try to one up me next time we met. My oldest and dearest friend told me when I told her of my diagnosis, "Be sure to tell 'em you want "Stripper **Breasts!**" (Looking down) **Well, she used the less politically correct T-word.** You can see that no one listened to me.

I felt a lump in my right breast at the end of the summer. I thought little of it. I had had such things in the past and they had amounted to nothing. Besides, my next mammogram wasn't due until October. I mentioned it to my doctor when I saw her in September. She had me check it out w/ultrasound. By October 10, the biopsies done, I was pronounced a **her 2 Nu** cancer patient with a tumor that had metastasized towards my thoracic region. The rest was a blur of treatments, doctor's appointments, surgical procedures and hospital internments. My battle was further complicated by my Diabetes diagnosis. It compromised my immune system and most treatment was slowed because of it. After everything was "over" my Oncologist summed it up by saying, "We just threw the book at you!" And a few jackhammers working over time, I might add.

When I discovered Cancer Patient Care through the suggestion of the team at Providence, I knew I was home. I can't say enough about the warmth I encountered. They took me in and showed me the ropes...backstage. They listened to me and gave kindness, hope, and much needed compassion for my journey. The first time I went down there I was loaded up with supplementary nutrition drinks and warm knitted hats and scarves. I also spied the myriad wigs, which I would soon enough need. I felt like a new woman. You see, they knew what I needed, even if I didn't. They knew that I wouldn't tolerate much in the way of food. Coffee tasted like pond silt and red wine like mud. All foods in between were a mimic of cold gravy and potatoes. They knew how to touch someone with the comfort born of this need. I received much needed gas and food vouchers that helped to get me through. CPC was a relief from an intended hell...

I also was given the opportunity to be treated to a special wellness program through Cancer Patient Care. I met Melanie Morlan, I call her Melanie Jelly Bean because she's full of flavor and very colorful. She introduced me to many options including massage, yoga, a YMCA membership, and much more. What a treat for my recovery.

Many people supported me when I didn't have a leg - or a breast - to stand on. I wouldn't have made it without them. I have my mother who is a caretaker par excellence after surgery. She's got the drain thing down and is a gourmet cook. The views from the 'suite' were tremendous. I highly recommend her. My sister, who has a medical background, navigated me through the many different doctors and appointments and reminded me what needed to be done. Her care and kindness couldn't be bought. And, of course, my son. He was the one who made countless trips to the store to get something that I craved or needed during this time. He is sixteen and a credit the art of being a teenager. I have a new son, David, who is staying with us for awhile. I call him the "artist". Look at his arms.

I know you're going to hate me for this... Statistics show that 1 in 3 people will receive a cancer diagnosis in their lifetime. All of you who are cancer survivors please stand... If you have a loved one who has cancer or are a caregiver please stand... If there is anyone else, please stand because chances are there will be someone you know who will have cancer. Now keep standing, and give yourselves and all cancer survivors a hand ... thanks for the standing ovation!