As they say, there is always the next chapter! Well here it is. Not the last chapter, to be sure, but the next chapter.

Just about the time you think you have this whole things licked, something comes along to kick you in the teeth or in my case the head. I got shingles. I had to laugh after the shock set in because of what my former boss said to me oh so many years ago. Walter Brown, owner of the television station where I worked, came through the lobby one day and I was standing there about to leave the building.

“Nancy,” he screamed. “Don’t get shingles! They are the worst and very painful.” I assured him I would not sign up for them if I was given an opportunity! I seldom gave them a thought after that.

He was right. They are the worst, but fortunately the terrible head ache and true suffering did not last but a few days. It was far worse than the cancer treatments, at least for me! So once again, living through something I hoped I would never get or have.

Mine began with a terrible headache and went downhill from there. I broke out with sores next to my right eye and they spread to my forehead and cheek along with my eye. I was so miserable I didn’t care how I looked. I just wanted the pain to go away. Finally, after two weeks, I feel somewhat good though I certainly don’t look good. The $50.00 a tube of ointment still has not done a beauty treatment on me so I just don’t look in the mirror except to put more on!
I know the Lord won’t give you more than you can take. I guess I can take more than I thought I could. He only knows!

The shingles are now gone but not forgotten. Almost 3 months have gone by and I am still numb across my forehead. My eye doesn’t open completely, but I am wearing my contacts again and that is a major step forward.

My August appointment with the oncologist revealed that my blood had gone from 7 to 11. I have no idea what that means other than he ordered a PET scan. My August appointment with my surgeon meant that he ordered a CT scan. So in September I had a CT scan first. It was not bad at all. I had had one of them soon after the cancer was discovered. I had to fast for 4 hours before arriving at the hospital. Then I was given two bottle of white vanilla flavored liquid. I was to drink one and thirty minutes later, the second one. Then I was put into the photography room where I had to stretch out on this skinny table in a hospital gown. They started an IV and told me I would feel warm all over, might even feel like I was wetting myself, but not to worry, I would not be doing that! Comforting! The machine looked like a large donut. They ran me back and forth through the donut for about 15 minutes and we were done. Got dressed and I was back home. I did have several trips to the bathroom during the rest of the morning but nothing bad.

The next test was several days later and was the PET scan. Since I had not had one of these, I was apprehensive about it. In the end, it was no worse than the CT scan. I was to fast 4-6 hours before the test, which was at noon. I ate a little oatmeal and fruit about 6:00am and then drank water until the test time. They said I could drink all the water I wanted. I arrived at the hospital at 11:30am. I was taken to a small room where they put me in a lounge chair. They put a warm blanket over me (best part), told me to drink this cup of liquid and just relax for 45 minutes. I
was not to talk on my cell phone or do anything except relax and watch TV. In 45 minutes, they gave me another cup of the same liquid. In about 15 minutes, they came and got me. I took off my bra, went to the ladies’ room and then to the photography room. Again, I was stretched out on this skinny tray. The worst part was putting my arms up over my head. I was told to just relax but not to move until they told me I could. They said just to breathe normally and it would be over in a few minutes. The “camera” again was a large donut that they ran me back and forth through. I kept my eyes closed the whole time so I really didn’t know when I was in and when I was out except the light in the room got lighter and darker I guess when I was going in and out of the donut. The whole thing was no longer than 45 minutes and was not bad at all. Then I was finished with both scans.

The purpose of all of the scans was to determine why my blood was not acting right. The CT scan showed nothing but the PET scan showed a small shadow on my liver. It was a very tiny place but my oncologist ordered a biopsy of the place.

Once again, back to the hospital to get the scoop on how the biopsy would be done. A biopsy of something in my liver was not a pleasant thought, but it was what it was! They did all of the pre-opt stuff they had to do and told me when to come back for the actual biopsy the next day.

When I was prepped for the procedure, the doctor came in and did an ultra sound. He talked to me the whole time saying it was so small, he wasn’t sure he could do a biopsy. We discussed back and forth whether to proceed or just scrap the whole thing. In the end, he decided that he could get a small sample and we would at least make a “stab” at it! They gave me some lovely gas and I remember nothing else until I was in the recovery room and Bob was reading the
newspaper waiting for me to wake up. The hardest part of this procedure was having to stay in
the hospital, on the bed for 6 hours. They just wanted to be sure that my liver didn’t bleed so I
was okay with that.

I left the hospital and was told it would be several days before they would have the results.
However, the next evening, while we were driving to dinner, my cell phone rang. It was Dr.
Bowers, my oncologist. I answered the phone, scared to hear what he would say.

“The biopsy did not show anything,” he said.

“What does that mean?” I asked.

“Well, it really did not show anything good or bad,” he said. “So, we will just continue to watch
it and monitor your blood and for the time being, don’t worry about it!”

“That sounds like good news to me,” I said.

“Yes, I will see you in December and we will go from there.” He said.

I felt like the weight of the world was lifted off of me. I felt as if I had a new lease on life. I
guess I did because I was free to come and go and not worry about any medical issues, at least
for three months.

The fourth of December 2012, it was back to my oncologist for my regular checkup on my
blood. I had the blood work done, saw the doctor and left. They said they would call me if there
was anything abnormal. Several days went by and I thought all was well. NOT SO FAST! I was
leaving for a week at the beach on December 10 and was hoping nothing would mess that up.
The call from the oncologist came toward the end of the week saying that my blood was not
good. I would need another CT scan to determine the problem. I went to the beach and the day
after I got back, I was scheduled for a mammogram and a CT scan. The results were in quickly that Monday and by Friday, I had an appointment with a liver surgeon and two weeks later with a surgeon that would repair the hernia in my stomach. Wow! Once the ball started moving, that ball was moving fast.

The CT scan showed the tiny place that was checked in September was now a small tumor in my liver that had to come out. The surgeon that would do that said he would also remove my gallbladder because it was in the way! OK. Then off to see the surgeon that during the same procedure would repair my hernia. By January 8, all of the plans were in place. Surgery to do these three procedures was scheduled for Tuesday, January 29, 2013. My sister was coming from Atlanta to stay with me in the hospital for what should be only a couple of days. At the end of the surgery and a short recovery, I was to see my oncologist about starting chemo again. Dr. Bowers had already prepared me for that. In fact, on the phone when he told me the news that the tumor had to go, he said he was sure it was malignant and that we would start chemo after surgery. I told him I was not pleased about that and he assured me that he would not give me the same kind of chemo he had given me before. I was afraid to ask if it would be better or worse! Since it didn’t really matter, what was the point of telling me?

A few days before my surgery, Margaret, a friend of mine who serves on the board of the Gibbs Cancer Clinic Foundation called me. She said that at the board meeting that day, the Director of Development, a friend of mine also, had made a report about a new physician that had been hired to be the Director of the Gibbs Cancer and Research Clinic. He had come from M. D. Anderson in Houston, the Moffitt Clinic in Florida, was doing very exciting research with NASA and by the way, was a liver surgeon! Margaret nearly jumped up and down. When the meeting was over, she went to Sheila who had made the report and told her that I was getting ready to have liver
surgery and chemo. Margaret and Sheila decided I needed to meet this new man, Dr. Timothy Yeatman. They put the balls in motion.

As soon as I was well enough to call Dr. Bowers, my oncologist, I placed the call. I told him that I wanted to meet Dr. Yeatman and discuss my case. Dr. Bowers said he was already ahead of me on that and that Dr. Yeatman had my records and was going over them. He asked if I would be able to meet with the two of them on Friday, February 22? I told him I would be there.

Bob and I went to meet with the two doctors to find out what kind of chemo I would have and when the treatments would start, how long they would last, what side effects there would be, and other questions. We were all prepared when the two doctors came into the room. Dr. Yeatman was very personable and seemed interested in my case. After several comments about my liver and the tumor, he said, “We have decided that you have had enough chemo and we will not be giving you anymore!”

I made him say it twice. I could not believe my ears. I wanted to jump up and down. I hugged Dr. Bowers three times before I left the room. They said that I would have a CT scan in three months, then a PET scan three months later and so on for a year, watching my liver very closely.

God is so good. I know Dr. Yeatman will help many people while he is at Gibbs, but I also know God sent him for me, just in time to save me from more chemo. Had he not come, I would have been back on chemo since that was the best information available until he came. Now there is a new level of cancer treatment knowledge available and I am benefiting from it.

I began to weep tears of great joy. I could not stop. I know others there must have thought I had received bad news but surely the smile on my face gave it away that the news was the best ever.
So many people have been praying for me for so long and I know God hears and answers prayers. I am proof of that for sure.

Now I am waiting for the CT scan in April and we will go from there. I hope my blood work will be good in March as that would indicate that things are better.