

# **POSITIVE RESULTS**

**True Stories of Inspiration and Hope for  
Cancer Fighters and Caretakers**

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## ONE

### The Grass Door

*Life is too short to be little.*

—Disraeli

Cancer could kill me, but not destroy me. On a bitter cold, rainy day in March, 2014, I felt a prescient need to buy my own eternal resting site. This despite being only in my mid-forties and receiving a call from my

## TWO

### The Accidental Caretaker

*You cannot prevent the birds of sorrow from  
flying over your head, but you can prevent them from  
building a nest in your hair.*

—Chinese Proverb

### Part I

### John “Dad” McAleer

My father died November 19, 2003,  
ending a ten-year battle with non-Hodgkin’s

### THREE

#### The 800-Pound Saltine

*Better to light one candle than to  
curse the darkness.*

—Old Chinese Proverb

There wasn't a chance in hell I'd let something as small as a saltine lick me. I'd admit I had doubts about who would lick whom, and maybe I was just talking tough, but in the end it went down. Not without a

## FOUR

### That Bottom Drawer on the Left

*Where the caravan is looking for  
a fjord, the fool on foot has  
crossed the river.*

—Persian Proverb

I honestly don't know why I opened that bottom drawer on the left. Maybe because I'd suddenly remembered that it was stuck the last time I'd tried to open it, about three years prior, and now I felt ready to take

## FIVE

### **The Old Man and the Mutt**

*You will find adventure on the road  
not in the Inn.*

—Cervantes

I sometimes get the feeling my right leg is dying on me. Maybe that's an unfair accusation. My leg's been good to me and is owed better. Perhaps it's me dying on my leg.



## SIX

### Move Over, the Cheeseburger's Driving

*A bit of fragrance always clings to the hand  
that gives you roses.*

—Old Chinese proverb

I would do all the driving.

The idea popped into my mind one day in March 2006, when cancer cures had left me physically weak, unable to eat, and feeling like

## SEVEN

### All That Matters

*You are not what you think you are;  
but what you **think**, you are.*  
—Norman Vincent Peale

I'm not sure I understood why at the time, but the thought of having radical surgery in 2014 to remove my second malignant tumor in nine years didn't worry me. When making the decision to operate, I'd joked with

## EIGHT

### Who Would Have Known Those Were Good Times?

*Absence of occupation is not rest. A mind quite  
vacant is a man distressed.*

—William Cowper

The only thing longer than hospital days are hospital nights—especially when you're not sleeping through them. That first night, after my groin dissection surgery in

## NINE

### Robin Company Soldiers On

*Good books, like good friends,  
are few and chosen;  
the more select, the more enjoyable.*

—Louisa May Alcott

At the age of forty I was seriously considering joining the Massachusetts Army National Guard. In addition to wanting to blow out all the cobwebs from what I had

## TEN

### Asses and Elbows

*The vocation of every man and woman  
is to serve others.*

—Tolstoi

I can still hear and picture my boss Bud Foley tearing me a new one that Monday morning in August 1985. “It’s asses and elbows here on the weekends,” Bud said to

## ELEVEN

### The Accidental Caretaker

#### Part II

#### Ruth “Mom” McAleer

*The best things are the most difficult.*

—Ancient Greek Proverb

Until cancer got its venomous fangs into her, my mother had been a world-champion “doer.” She was always doing something. Whether reading, teaching, knitting, weeding, swimming, planning,

## TWELVE

### It Takes a Caravan

*Always have time for others and others  
will have time for you.*

—John McAleer, PhD

I don't necessarily think of myself as a cancer survivor. It makes it sound like I slugged it up that long hill under my own steam. Such a claim would be untrue. I was just one of the many fighters out there who