POSITIVE RESULTS

True Stories of Inspiration and Hope for Cancer Fighters and Caretakers

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CONTENTS

1 The Grass Door 10
2 The Accidental Caretaker Part I 26
3 The 800-Pound Saltine 37
4 That Bottom Drawer on the Left 50
5 The Old Man and the Mutt 71
6 Move Over, the Cheeseburger's Driving 87
7 All That Matters 103
8 Who Would Have Known Those Were Good Times? 125
9 Robin Company Soldiers On 145
10 Asses and Elbows 167
11 The Accidental Caretaker Part II 195
12 It Takes a Caravan 210
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