

WHITE COATS

Laurie's Speech to the Medical Students at Upstate Medical University, 2006

I have suffered the rigors of breast cancer for eight years. I have been a patient here for three. Prior to that I spent years visiting the best cancer hospitals in the country, touring state of the art treatment facilities and garnering second opinions. I had the fortune to be seen by renowned experts, but frankly it was all very generic. Doctors promising me nothing but great confidence in themselves. Not one of those people can cure me.

It is all very desensitizing to me at this point. The white coats used to have such an allure with me, now it means something very different. My challenge with this battle is to make all the right decisions for me. I have been asked repeatedly to trade my life, livelihood and vigor for confusing, astounding and terrifying treatment choices. I will most certainly disappoint any doctor of mine because I am not willing to be a living lab for synthetic drugs. I could care less about the latest greatest chemo. I realize my doctor is powerless. But this is where the magic happens, because when you're powerless, you're forced to create new possibilities.

This is not a struggle of wills, it's living. I want my doctor to walk MY walk with me, to find our stride. And trust will pave our way.

I want you to speak to me like a friend, and get on my level. This is a business of research and medicine but you deal in people. There is more to this relationship than doling out medicine.

To be my doctor, you have got to be willing to get out behind that white coat and take chances with me. Our journey is going to be a long one, and I will settle for nothing less than a truly rewarding experience.



*Kathleen and Laurie with
Dr. George Wong and Dr. Lin*