

## CONTENTS

# Cancer as a Legacy

BY KATHY LATOUR

I thought I had resolved all my guilt issues when my mother was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer at age 72, five years to the week after my diagnosis. I looked at my then 6-year-old daughter as I read the newest information on the genetic link to cancer.

Had I passed on more than my blue eyes and weird sense of humor? Genetic experts at the time said chances were low that I carried the BRCA1 mutation, and the cost of testing at the time was too high to consider since insurance didn't cover it. Besides, I knew that by the time my daughter was old enough for breast cancer to be an issue, there would be other cancer-causing genes and better tests. So, I did what I could to keep her active and healthy while providing age-appropriate information to her about what was now a family disease.

But there was guilt. I could handle anything but thinking I had given this disease to my child. She was 9 the first time she asked me if she would get breast cancer. I had to gulp before calmly telling her I didn't know, but I hoped not and we would do all the right things to be sure she was healthy.

I haven't been tested yet for the gene and my daughter turns 21 this year. According to statistics, her risk for breast cancer begins 10 years before my diagnosis, which means she is at risk in six years. Testing is something I feel I should now do since my brother was diagnosed with prostate cancer three years ago at age 48. But I am reluctant. My biggest fear: I will be negative and my daughter will stop her vigilance, even though the greatest risk factor will always be our gender.

I have decided it's time to be tested. I'll report back in an upcoming issue.