

Going home ... again

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CURE invited Suzanne Harp, a recently diagnosed breast cancer survivor, to serve as a guest blogger during the 10th Annual Conference for Young Women Affected by Breast Cancer in Atlanta, February 26-28.

As we headed home from the [Young Survivor's Conference](#) I made a stop at the Atlanta airport's food court. As I waffled between Popeye's (fried chicken, biscuits, and baked sweet potatoes) or Au Bon Pain (salads and whole grain bread sandwiches), I froze.

Time stood still. To quote Yogi Berra, "It's deja vu all over again."

I actually said out loud to nobody, "When was I here before?" My mind was blank.

And then it hit me. I had been standing in this very spot, making this very same food choice in September, about 36 hours before I got my biopsy results.

Let me backtrack. Six months ago I didn't know much about cancer. I had never heard of ER+ or Oncotype tests. All I knew is I went for a mammogram, had a biopsy, and was told by my radiologist, "I'm about 95 percent sure this is cancer."

The next days were the hardest. Friends wanted to hold on to that hope that I would be in the 5 percent. But as a reporter, I am used to reading between the lines. The doctors knew what they were looking at. Still, I would have to wait through Labor Day weekend for the official verdict.

So I did what any sane New Yorker would do. I flew to Opelousas, Louisiana for the [Zydeco music festival](#). I had interviewed the organizer back in 2000, and the festival had always been on my to-do list. I had no idea if I would ever have the chance again. Would I be healthy the next year? Would I even be alive?

That Thursday night I bought a ticket with an ugly NYC-Boston-Atlanta-Alexandria, Louisiana itinerary, and headed off for a weekend of amazing music in a place where cancer could not find me.

But come Sunday, I was back in the Atlanta airport, knowing my escape was ending. Time for one more meal in the South.

My devil said, "This could be the last meal you enjoy without knowing you have cancer. Have fried chicken." My angel said, "You have cancer. You need to start eating healthy."

In the end, I split the difference. I ate a salad and had one wing. But I won't forget that feeling of standing on the precipice between benign and malignant, the time ticking away on the game clock of my innocence.

However, this weekend, on the way home from the YSC conference, I was not alone. My friend Deb walked by, took one look at me and said, "What's wrong?" I explained the story, and said it was ironic, that after a weekend at a conference for

women with breast cancer, the only thing that made me cry was a food court.

That September airport meal now seems like a lifetime ago. I have been operated on, radiated, and pumped full of pills. But I am now on the other side, and I hope to someday again [dance in the fields of Louisiana](#), this time cancer-free.



Suzanne Harp spent 10 years as a television news anchor in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Maine, and New York. She was diagnosed with breast cancer in September. She lives in New York City with her husband Ethan, and blogs at www.joinourloop.blogspot.com