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## Good news means having courage to make long-term plans

By Gaydon Willis

On Oct. 18, 2006, I received the news that cancer had spread to two spots on my bones and life expectancy was four years.

On Oct. 18, 2007, I received the good news that the cancer has not spread and that the two spots I have on my bones are now "barely visible."

What a difference a year can make!

Can you guess how I feel? Amazed, relieved, and happy. Deliriously happy! Crazy happy! I nearly danced out of my oncologist's office.

I walked outside and the world seemed clearer, brighter, more in focus. The sky was bluer and the sun shone brighter than I had ever seen. Everything looked and felt different. I found myself laughing uncontrollably. What a day!

Now I find myself making plans. Not just for the next few months, but long-term. I have the courage to look down the road five, even 10 years, from now and see where I envision myself to be, what life might be like. Do you know how special it is to be able to do that? And for the first time in a year I'm starting to think just maybe I can beat this thing.

We've all been told that life is a journey, but I've discovered it's not what we think. Sometimes we need to take side trips to experience situations that take us off our path and challenge us. Those experiences can offer us our biggest learning and opportunity for growth.

Side trips are not to be feared. Oh yes, we may feel lost or out of control for a time but if we look really hard we may discover that there is a lesson to be learned, a relationship to be healed, a decision to be made, a new attitude or belief to be acquired, or an old opinion to let go of.

Going more deeply into our growth process furthers our journey and gets us going in the right direction once more. We discover things about ourselves we never knew. We find ourselves doing things we never thought possible and realize just how wonderfully amazing we are. And that is when we really get it.

It's not the destination of the journey, but the journey itself that counts.

I'm back on the road and I'm not wasting any time. I

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smile more, talk to strangers, play with my grandkids, dance and find something to laugh about every day. I tell the people in my life that I love them. I say thank you every day for my blessings. And I celebrate the special days like birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, new jobs, new babies, new everything! These are milestones and deserve to be recognized.

I am getting ready to celebrate my 65th birthday Nov. 9.

Yes, 65 years!

Funny how so many of us are ashamed or embarrassed about how old we are. Is it because we fear old age and what it invariably brings? Do we think that we might be put on the shelf, that we are past our best date?

I remember my grandmother was 52 for about 15 years, and as a kid I wondered how she had a birthday every year but never got older!

Advertisers tell us that we need to "fight the ravages of time" but I'm starting to like my ravages. Some flock to plastic surgeons for enhancements, reductions, nips and tucks. Does this work? Perhaps. But aren't there other things more important to worry about than our age?

I'm proud of every year I've had. Some were better than others, but hey, each year has been a gift.

I've invited nearly everyone I know to help me celebrate the big event and the very good news I have just had.

How great it is to have a life!

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