

# The Sherlock Story

"IF...my main detective, and favorite companion, Sherlock, had scratched my arm instead of my chest

IF...Sherlock had scratched my left chest instead of my right

IF...my surgeon had not been so careful and conscientious

IF...my surgeon had not listened to my guardian angel and gone back in to just be sure

**THEN** I wouldn't be here today.

**IF... IF...IF** Too many "IFS!".

We **CAN** do better than this. We **MUST** do better than this. We **DESERVE** better than this."

*-Martha H. Kaley, Founder*

"I knew I was in trouble when I came home and found no one here and the newspaper open and a huge circle around the listing 'For Sale-Chocolate Labs'. That is what my husband said- and that was the beginning of the Sherlock Story.

I have always loved animals, especially dogs. If I could, I would take in every stray or lost dog that I encounter. Fortunately, Jim, my husband, is my stabilizing force so that I don't do this. However, I had wanted a dog and had convinced our son, Mark - who was 12 at the time - that he wanted a dog, too. After countless conversations with neighbors, friends, and our veterinarian about various breeds we decided that a Labrador retriever was the dog for us. Playful, energetic, and



obedient was just what our family needed!

With the search now in full force I scanned the paper every day looking for the perfect puppies. It was after I had picked Mark up from school one day that we set out to see a litter that had caught my attention. When we arrived,

there were six beautiful little chocolate kisses playing in the yard.

They were all pudgy, active, and absolutely adorable. Trying to keep my focus I told the man that I was interested in a female, and only a female. Of course the females were all spoken for. So there I was standing next to my 12 year old son, who had spent the entire car ride talking about the puppy he was going to bring home trying to figure out our options. The first option was that we were going to have to wait for the next litter to arrive which would be several months; the second, we choose a male, and the third, we go home puppy-less. I have never been one to wait on anything so a male it would be. As we watched the puppies play I remembered someone telling me that if a

puppy had a knot on its head, it was supposed to be more intelligent. (For future reference, don't believe that one).

When we picked him up after Thanksgiving, we should have known what we would be facing. All of the other puppies were out playing with each other but we didn't see Sherlock. After scanning the yard we found him with a "stick" that was about the size of a small tree running towards us! Somehow, he reminded me of myself...was there really any such thing as "biting off more than you can chew?" That playful, energetic, and obedient dog that was "just what our family needed"... Sherlock certainly was playful and energetic! Obedient? Not so much. At four months of age we decided it was time Sherlock tried obedience classes. The trainer said that she had never seen a more stubborn dog! After working with her for several weeks it was apparent that one of us was actually learning something. I learned that Sherlock liked to wrestle every morning...with me...and that he *really* liked treats. I had become the most obedient dog owner

Sherlock had ever had. Wait! Is there something wrong with this picture? Let it be stated that Sherlock was definitely our problem child. Our son had always been a joy and never a problem. Truthfully, however, we voted on a weekly basis about whether we would keep Sherlock or let him go to a farm.

Funny, the vote was always three to one and somehow the “one” won out-and Sherlock always made it to the weekly voting sessions.

What is important to know about me, the most obedient owner Sherlock had ever had, is that since I was 30 years old, I have been an active, very health oriented person. I have been conscientious about preventive health and attended to routine testing as recommended, even to the point of overkill. Accordingly, when I was 35 years old, I had my first mammogram in order to establish a baseline because that was the standard medical recommendation. There was no particular reason for this. There is no history of breast cancer in my family. Being diligent, I just decided that I would request an annual mammogram. And, according to schedule, in December of 1991 I had my mammogram with the results being nothing but normal.

In March, 1992, three months after my clear mammogram, I was wrestling with Sherlock and he scratched my chest. The next day I noticed that there was a straight line bruise that ran down my chest, and at the base I felt a mass. My initial reaction was panic. I had never felt anything like that before. However, being the rationale person that I am, I reminded myself that I had always had cystic fibroid breast tissue and therefore it was very difficult to discern anything in my breast. I decided that I would wait a month and if it had not disappeared, I would see my gynecologist. Like I stated before, I’m not one to wait. Within days, I had an appointment.

My doctor wasn’t particularly disturbed by the mass, but did a needle aspiration to determine if it was a cyst. While he didn’t get any fluid, he was able to withdraw cells and sent them to pathology. He said he would let me know the results. I went home feeling anxious but with not as much of the haunting feeling as before.

A few days later, I had just walked in from a run and the phone was ringing. It was my doctor. He said that the cells were “atypical”. When I asked him what that meant exactly, he told me the cells were not benign or malignant, they just weren’t normal. With that being said, he advised me to have the mass removed by a surgeon.

I was lying on the table in the exam room when my surgeon came in for the consultation. Needless to say, I was quite nervous. He examined me, and like my gynecologist, was not disturbed because he said the mass felt benign. He still felt that the mass should be removed based on the pathology report. I wanted to do it the next day because we were leaving for vacation and I wanted to have this off of my mind. He preferred to wait until we returned in case I would need care after the surgery. Besides, one week would not make that big of a difference. I left the office with a big question mark over my head. I was certainly frightened, but in an attempt at rationalization I just told myself that I had some cells that might be pre-cancerous and I just wanted to get them removed.

My surgery was scheduled for the Monday after we returned from vacation. Jim and I didn’t expect to be there too long. We

were just going to get this thing out and move on with our lives.

After about an hour into the surgery, my surgeon came out to see Jim. Jim said, “He looked as if someone had hit him in the face with a brick.” He told my husband that the mass that he removed was benign just as they suspected. They had done a quick freeze and knew that it was nothing to be worried about. As he was closing me up, he said he “just decided” to look around. Pressed up against my chest wall he found a malignant mass in the breast tissue. It was too deep to feel and it was the same density as normal breast tissue so it could not be seen on imaging, which is why I had a clear mammogram reading only a few months before.

So, do you think we ever voted about keeping Sherlock again?

As they say, “The rest is history” but in truth this was just the beginning for *Friends for an Earlier Breast Cancer Test*®

Not everyone has a **Sherlock**, but everyone does have **FRIENDS**.

**In loving memory of  
Sherlock Kaley &  
Dr. Murray Abrams,  
both of whom  
discovered Martha’s  
potentially fatal breast  
cancer over  
15 years ago...**

