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Friday, 21st September 2012

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## Cancer couldn't stop me from having Thomas



Friday, September 21, 2012



[Faversham Times](#)

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TOLD she would never be able to have children after a potentially life-saving operation, Vanessa Price stunned doctors when she refused the surgery. But two years after being diagnosed with ovarian cancer, Vanessa, 39, of Grove Place, overcame all the odds to become pregnant with her son Thomas.

Now she is a volunteer ambassador for charity Target Ovarian Cancer, trying to make sure other women understand the early warning signs.



1.

LITTLE MIRACLE: Vanessa Price with her two-year-old son, Thomas Ruffles-Price

2.

FIGHTER: Target Ovarian Cancer ambassador Vanessa Price GICM20120913A-002\_C

• •  
• •

She told Claire McWethy why she thinks cancer was the best thing that ever happened to her.

When did you realise you had cancer?

I was diagnosed in 2008. I had been suffering from indigestion and bloating and had pains in my pelvis, so I went to the doctor. Over the next eight months I was treated for a stomach ulcer, then a urinary tract infection, then irritable bowel syndrome. It gradually got worse and one evening I collapsed and had to be taken to A and E.

Was that then you were diagnosed?

No, I was sent home with painkillers. It wasn't until I collapsed a week later that I was given a scan. I was left lying on the floor for 12 hours because I couldn't move and was drifting in and out of consciousness.

I lived alone so it was only when I managed to drag myself to a phone and call an ambulance that I was rescued. It was there, lying on the cold, hard floor of my bathroom when I realised that there was something very badly wrong.

What did the scan find?

There was a 13cm cyst which was removed the next day. After that I was called back, thinking it was a routine check up. That was when I was told it was not benign. The doctor never used the word "cancer", but I knew straight away.

What was your reaction?

At first I thought that was it, that it was game over. I was in shock when I found out, it was only during the treatment it really hit me. I'd never heard of ovarian cancer before.

What treatment did you have?

I had six rounds of chemotherapy, which was just awful, but luckily my hair didn't fall out. Then I was told I should have a full hysterectomy, but I refused.

I was single then, but my biggest desire was to one day have children so despite the insistence of my doctors I took a risk. They said I'd probably lose my fertility through the chemo anyway.

But they were wrong?

Yes, and now I have a two-year-old, Thomas, with my partner Ian. I found out I was pregnant five months after I finished the chemo.

How did you meet Ian?

It was just about a year after I'd been diagnosed, on a holiday offered by a cancer charity called Odyssey.

The idea of the trips is to challenge you and help you cope with the unexpected, so everything you do there is top secret. Ian was one of the challenge leaders.

In many ways having cancer was the best thing that ever happened to me.

How did you get involved with Target Ovarian Cancer?

I was searching the internet for information after I was diagnosed. I had so many questions and I found their website.

Afterwards I attended one of their Let's Talk events, where you can speak to other people with the illness.

So what does an ambassador do?

I'll be raising awareness about the illness by giving out leaflets, talking to people and GPs and will be available to give

talks. I'm the only one in this area, and will work as a volunteer all over Kent.

Were you angry about the misdiagnosis?

Initially I was, but then the more I found out about it the more I understood it. Many GPs aren't aware of ovarian cancer, just like the patients.

That's one of the reasons I became an ambassador, to help other people who have the illness and to urge them to go to their doctors, and persist in going, if they have the symptoms.

What are they?

The main four are persistent bloating, pelvic pain, difficulty eating, feeling full quickly and a change in urinary habits.

So what now?

The big milestone is five years after the cancer goes into remission, and for me that's in 2014.

I'm just enjoying life with my new family now. The cancer has given me a new perspective.

Do you have a paid job as well?

I'm an analyst for a pharmaceutical company in Sheppey. Before that I worked at Pfizer in Sandwich for ten years.

Any hobbies?

I love power kiting and used to be a keen horse rider. I also enjoy sailing with my partner. He's a skipper of Thames barges including the old historical boats in London. He's also one of the skippers for Cambria, the barge which was restored in Faversham, so I've developed a passion for them too.

Faversham born and bred?

No, but I've lived in Kent all my life. I lived in Canterbury until I was 14 and have lived in Deal, Eastry, and then Faversham for about 10 years. I was actually living in Abbey Street when the gas explosion happened.

Where were you?

I was in bed. It happened on a Sunday morning, and I was only two doors away from where it happened. There was this bright flash of light and then everything went black.

Bits of glass from the window actually flew across the room and became embedded in the wall, fire destroyed the roof and a burst water main flooded the basement level bedroom.

Did you have to move out?

I lived in temporary accommodation for six months while repairs were made. The camaraderie on the street was amazing afterwards, though. I wouldn't want to move away from Faversham now.

What do you like about it?

The people are just so friendly.

Ever seen a ghost?

Yes. I worked at a boarding school in Lyminge when I was younger and lived in an old cottage which was very haunted, although nobody told me that at the time.

One day I saw a man in a top hat and the only feature I could make out was this big nose. When I screamed and turned on the light he disappeared. I didn't tell anyone until other people told me they'd seen things too.

First record?

Remember You're a Womble by The Wombles!

First car?

A jasmine yellow Ford Escort.

Dream dinner party guests?

Comedian David Walliams and singer David Bowie.

For more information visit [www. targetovariancancer.org.uk](http://www.targetovariancancer.org.uk)

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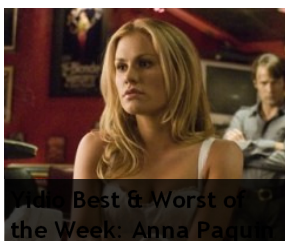
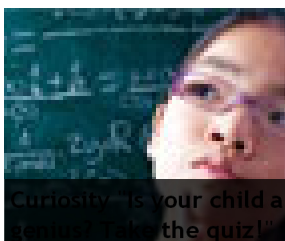
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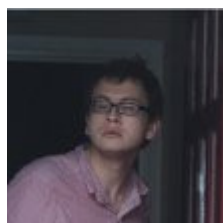
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Free phone in session this friday between 9pm and 11pm, on 07782158008. [www.8steps.co.uk](http://www.8steps.co.uk) provides the latest technique in weight loss, both face-to-face and online weight loss.

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