A woman is lying on a gurney in a medical setting, possibly a hospital or clinic. She is wearing a light green hospital gown. The background shows medical equipment, including a computer monitor and a desk with various items. The lighting is soft and focused on the woman.

SHERYL ANDERMAN SHARES HER JOURNEY

And Why Breast Cancer Research Is Vital

by Michelle Bearden

OF ALL THE MILESTONES IN SHERYL ANDERMAN'S LIFE, THE ONE THAT SHOOK HER WORLD CAME ON JULY 9, 2013.

On that morning, the Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., woman got the call confirming her worst suspicions. She learned the recent tests showed her tumor had tested positively for cancer.

At that moment, Anderman, then 57, was on her way to joining the more than 2.8 million breast cancer survivors in the United States. During her journey, she would learn that breast cancer is the most common cancer in females and that its mortality rate is second only to lung cancer.

“It was like an out-of-body experience,” she recalls. “It didn’t seem like it was really happening. Once it sunk in, I knew from that day forward, my life would never be the same.”

Anderman admits the fear came at her “in every direction.” It brought back a rush of bad memories centered on her late mother, diagnosed with soft-tissue sarcoma at age 71. Eighteen months later, she was dead. Because mother and daughter resembled each other in so many ways, Anderman feared that she, too, would suffer the same fate.

She picked up the phone and called her husband, Wayne, a private wealth manager.



SHERYL ANDERMAN
SURVIVOR

“They wanted to get things moving now. Not start the process in a month and drag it out, but as soon as possible.”

“IT’S NOT THE NEWS WE WANTED TO HEAR,” SHE TOLD HIM, HER VOICE BREAKING. TALKING ON THE PHONE MADE IT EVEN MORE SURREAL. SO SHE GOT IN HER CAR AND MADE A TEARFUL DRIVE TO HIS OFFICE. SHE NEEDED TO BE HELD AND HUGGED AND TOLD EVERYTHING WOULD BE OK. EVEN IF SHE DIDN’T BELIEVE IT.

That was the beginning of Anderman’s cancer journey.

What she has learned in the past two years could fill a book. Though she describes herself as a private person by nature, she will share her story as a survivor any time that a Moffitt representative makes a request. That’s because she says she owes “everything” to the medical institution that guided her from the diagnosis through the treatment and now the follow-up care.

Anderman kept good on her promise on July 15, 2014, when she shared her patient testimony at an appreciation reception for The Don Shula Foundation, where Don Shula, legendary former coach of the Miami Dolphins, announced a \$1.5 million gift to establish The Don Shula Breast Cancer Research Fund. Scientists at Moffitt, the only National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center based in Florida, will use that fund to support cutting-edge research projects aimed at generating new treatment and prevention strategies for breast cancer patients.

Anderman says she’s alive today because of dedicated professionals with the ultimate goal of eradicating this disease — and donors like Shula who give them the financial backing to find those answers. Without this support, she knows she could have been one of some 40,000 women in the U.S. who died of breast cancer in 2014.

“I have a lot to be grateful for,” Anderman says. “I don’t take any of this for granted.”

It began, as many breast cancer stories, with an annual mammogram.

Anderman had no reason to suspect anything was wrong. She went to a local south Florida clinic on April 17, 2013, for a routine screening, something she did without fail every year.

Only this time, the screening wasn’t so routine, and it brought the first wave of unsettling news. The mammogram revealed

something suspicious, so a diagnostic screening was scheduled a month later. Then in June, an MRI was ordered. The results of that test indicated the suspicious finding likely was cancer.

Anderman is not a woman who leaves things to chance. As the operations manager of a family-owned hotel construction business, she is committed to managing details and schedules. So she approached her personal medical crisis with the same organizational fervor that she devotes to her job.

“Of all the fears I had, the worst was that the medical system was so large that I would get lost in it,” she says. “And when that happens, do you begin to feel like a number? Will the bureaucracy take away any feeling that you’re a human being? And how can you be assured that you will get the right treatment to stop the cancer?”

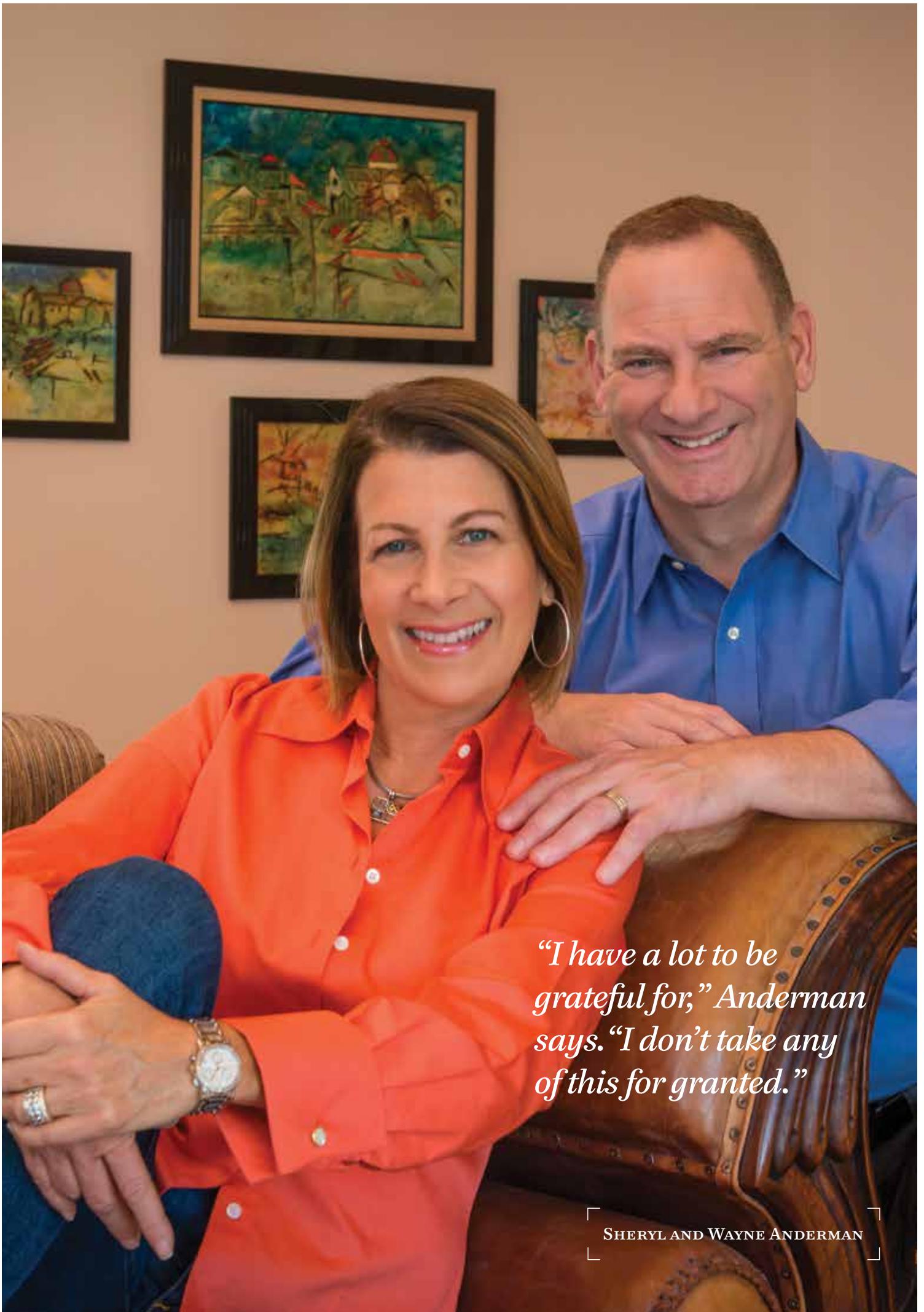
Although she still didn’t have a solid diagnosis, she felt preparation was the key to her sanity. So she spent countless hours on the computer, researching treatment centers, accessing cancer blogs, learning about innovative and experimental drugs. She became her own best advocate.

The few people she confided in gave her plenty of advice. But Anderman had to follow her own course. What she wanted was a hospital with a women’s center, a breast cancer clinic and a National Cancer Institute designation — all rolled into one. Moffitt Cancer Center came up time and time again.

In previous inquiries to other clinics about second opinions and further tests, Anderman was told it would be several weeks before she could get an appointment. For people worrying about life-and-death issues and the fate of their futures, that seemed like an eternity. But when Anderman made her first call to Moffitt, it was a different story.

“It was like, whoosh! I felt like I was being sucked into a vacuum, in a good way,” she says. “They wanted to get things moving now. Not start the process in a month and drag it out, but as soon as possible.”

Though choosing Moffitt meant an eight-hour round trip from her and Wayne’s south Florida home, that didn’t matter. They were both impressed with the center’s national reputation and that it offered all the services in one location.



“I have a lot to be grateful for,” Anderman says. “I don’t take any of this for granted.”

〔 SHERYL AND WAYNE ANDERMAN 〕



On July 8, 2013, at Moffitt, Anderman had another mammogram, MRI and biopsy. The very next day, she got that fateful call. Ten days later, she and her husband were meeting with the surgeon to discuss the results and treatment options. From that time forward, Anderman stopped consulting with the computer and put her trust into her newly formed Moffitt medical team.

There are several types of breast cancer. Some are invasive and fast-spreading; others are considered quite rare. Anderman was diagnosed with ER-PR positive HER-2 negative ductal carcinoma, caught at a very early stage. With a lumpectomy and radiation treatment, doctors told her the prognosis was good.

Anderman says those earlier fears of being treated like a nameless number in a long line of sick patients were quickly erased by her Moffitt caregivers. Each one, she says, was respectful, compassionate and generous with time and empathy. They included: diagnostic radiologist Alec Chau, M.D., who made sure the Andermans both were aware of all the procedures and possible outcomes; surgeon Christine Laronga, M.D., who also devoted hours of her time to explain, educate and reassure the couple; and radiation oncologist Randy Heysek, M.D., who agreed to put Anderman on a new protocol in fast-track radiation treatment.

THE DON SHULA BREAST CANCER RESEARCH FUND

The Don Shula Foundation is donating \$1.5 million to Moffitt Cancer Center to establish The Don Shula Breast Cancer Research Fund (The Shula Fund).

Don Shula, the winningest coach of all time, and his wife, Mary Anne, joined Moffitt to announce the fund at a partnership launch and news conference held July 15, 2014, in Fort Lauderdale.

The Don Shula Foundation, established in Miami more than 20 years ago as a tribute to Shula's late wife, Dorothy, will add a generous gift to a long-lasting relationship with Moffitt. The organization has supported breast cancer research at Moffitt for more than a decade, donating nearly half a million dollars. According to Shula, the new Shula Fund will fuel important breast cancer discoveries that will improve patient outcomes.

Participating Shula's Restaurants throughout Florida are helping to grow The Shula Fund through special promotions. Others can contribute to the fight to end breast cancer by donating to The Shula Fund at MOFFITT.org/ShulaFund.

“You’ve got to have peace of mind at a time like this, and I had it.”

For her medical oncologist, Anderman put her trust in the hands of Hatem Soliman, M.D., who specializes in breast cancer at Moffitt. His interest in cancer research dates back to his undergraduate studies in genetics. Dr. Soliman also spoke at the appreciation reception for The Don Shula Foundation, where he shared the importance of basic science research as a foundation for developing and testing new treatments for breast and other forms of cancer. In 2013, Dr. Soliman had received a grant from the Shulas to evaluate the use of a breast cancer vaccine to stimulate the immune system in the fight against breast tumors.

“When you’re facing the challenge of a lifetime, you want someone like Dr. Soliman, who is on the front lines of cutting-edge research,” Anderman says. “He’s dealing with these challenges hundreds of times a year. I felt such confidence with him in charge. You’ve got to have peace of mind at a time like this, and I had it.”

There were other factors that eased her journey. Her husband, who was involved in Anderman's treatment every step of the way, planned fun excursions to museums, restaurants and golf courses in conjunction with their trips to Tampa to help take

their minds off the reason they were coming in the first place. They got a special rate at one of the nearby hotels that partner with Moffitt. And Sheryl says she was seen in a timely manner for all her appointments.

Although she was prepared to handle the consequences of radiation, which can include some burning, fatigue and nausea, Anderman was among the fortunate patients who had very few side effects. She also was able to put her treatment on a fast track, with two radiation sessions daily for seven straight days. By the end of August, she was finished, with instructions to return for checkups every six months.

She's amazed how quickly she was able to resume her normal life. She and her husband are avid travelers and have visited both Paris and Palm Springs in the last year. They're planning a trip to London and a river cruise in Germany this summer.

Although surgery and radiation treatment are behind her, Anderman knows her cancer story is far from over. She will have to take maintenance medication for five to 10 years. Because it's an estrogen inhibitor, it affects her bones and leaves her with arthritic-like symptoms. She has revamped her diet, eating organic foods, avoiding anything with hormones and taking homeopathic anti-inflammatory supplements.

Her experience at Moffitt taught her that compassion and medical care do not have to be exclusive of each other. She learned that the treatment of cancer is a marathon, not a sprint, and that Moffitt will "pace this race with you, passing the baton from hand to hand in a coordinated effort."

She is grateful that she got this second chance. She wants to see where life takes her son, 25, a technician in a New York physical therapy clinic, and she wants to grow old with her husband. And she has every intention of continuing to enjoy the companionship of Nikki, her beloved Manchester terrier who provided such comfort to her in that scary summer of 2013.

Visit **MOFFITT.ORG/MOMENTUM**
to read this story online and view a video in which Sheryl
shares why breast cancer research is essential.

