

# Cancer taught me the real meaning of beauty

When Marion Davren, 54, from Glasgow, was robbed of her looks, it was her strength that shone through

**T**ravelling the globe, mingling with the rich and famous and starring in glamorous photoshoots, I felt on top of the world.

With my long blonde hair, pretty face and perfect figure, I'd made a success of my looks since the age of 17, when I'd been scouted by a modelling agency.

I went on to win high-profile modelling contracts, the titles of Miss Ibiza and Miss Glasgow, and even worked as a Playboy bunny at a casino in London before moving to Los Angeles when I was 24, to work as a cocktail bunny. I even partied at the Playboy Mansion. At other parties I rubbed shoulders with stars from Claudia Schiffer and Naomi Campbell to Rod Stewart, Bruce Willis and Sean Connery.

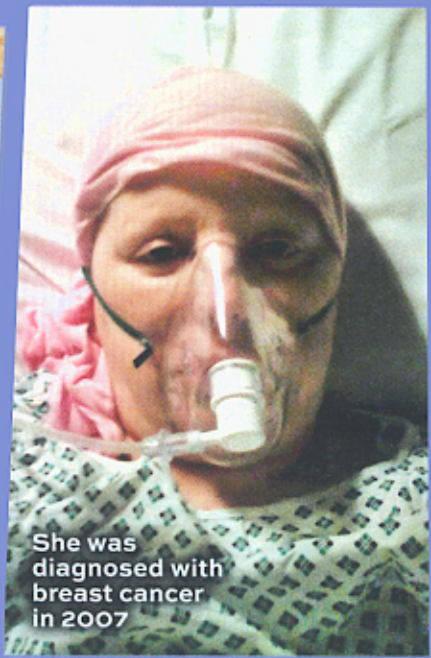
Specialising in lingerie and swimsuit photoshoots, I took pride in my body, and loved the life and career I'd built because of my appearance.

When I was 28, I set up a modelling agency in Dubai, and it was there I met my now ex-husband, with whom I had my son.

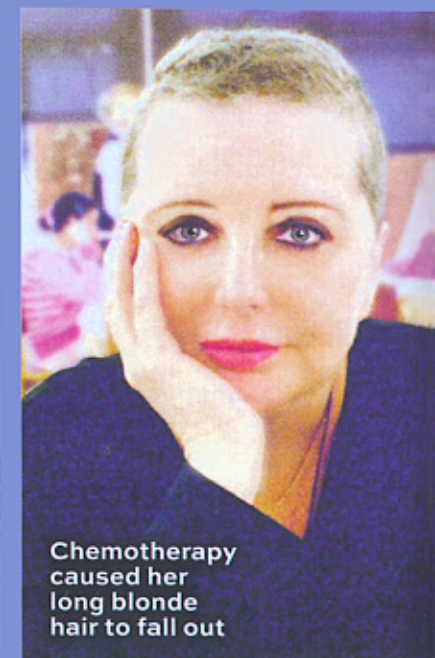
However, my marriage eventually broke down and, in 2001, my boy and I returned to Glasgow, where



Marion Davren was a successful model



She was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2007



Chemotherapy caused her long blonde hair to fall out

## MARION'S TOUGH JOURNEY

we built a new life.

After so many years travelling I craved stability, and I found comfort when I met Harry Morris, who was kind and funny.

But, in August 2007, after undergoing a routine mammogram, one doctor's words sent my whole world crashing down around me.

'You have cancer. If you don't have treatment immediately, you'll be dead in three months,' he said.

I was in disbelief. Because I suffered from lumpy boobs, I'd had regular mammograms, the last one was just a year before. It felt like the disease had sneaked up on me overnight.

There were three dangerous tumours in my breasts. I was sure I was going to die.

I'd gone from not knowing I had cancer on Monday, to having aggressive chemotherapy on Friday.

Now, my hair - my crowning glory - started falling out after just 17 days of treatment. Then, two days later, it was all gone.

I wouldn't have got through it if Harry hadn't been by my side.

He'd pick me up and take me to my appointments, sit with me during chemo, make me laugh or sit as we both read a magazine. He was like a safety blanket.

In January 2008 I

underwent a double mastectomy, removing what I'd always felt were my prized possessions.

Where my breasts had been was flat and bandaged.

I was in shock, but I wasn't out of the woods. In time, I had my ovaries removed, too.

I was a broken woman - my life had fallen apart.

The amazing career I had built up for myself before the cancer was reliant on my looks. My hair, my boobs and my femininity had been taken from me. I was having hot flushes and was badly burnt from the radiotherapy.

My cards had been handed to me and there was nothing I could do - I just had to fight the fight.



*'I lost my femininity but I was grateful to be alive'*



Mingling with A-listers like Rod Stewart was a regular event



Marion and her friend Harry Morris

'They don't use words like 'remission' so much any more, but, finally, after all the treatments, the doctors said they could no longer detect cancer in my body.

But instead of celebrating, I had a breakdown.

Looking in the mirror, I didn't recognise the woman staring back at me. That's when the depression hit.

I was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and had to spend five weeks in The Priory.

Afterwards I thought, 'What do I do now?'

While I was grateful to be alive, I couldn't handle having no breasts, hair or ovaries.

I tried to cover my bald head with cheerful scarves and even got a wig specially made, but nothing could make me feel myself.

I was bloated from steroids and I was amazed at the amount of thoughtless people I'd meet who would say, 'You've put on weight.'

For two years, I couldn't face the world.

Cancer is something that stays with you even after you remove all traces of it from your body. It changes your whole thought process.

I never stop thinking about it. It's always there.

I've used fundraising and

raising awareness of Legacy Giving to help me move on. The day I decided to fix my will to leave everything to cancer charities was joyful.

Celebrating with a bottle of wine, it felt great to be giving back to the charities that had helped me. From the nurses who called to check I was OK, to the people who helped me with chores.

Now I give talks to try to inspire other cancer sufferers to keep fighting the disease.

I'm proud to know I've encouraged people to leave money to cancer charities in their will, and that I've come out the other side after a horrendous few years.

Harry and I went to Las Vegas to celebrate being five years free from cancer - a day I thought I'd never see.

Despite the illness, I've had a busy, exciting and dramatic life. The cancer has taught me that I'm stronger than I ever thought I could be.

I want other women to realise that there is a light at the end of the tunnel and that, even at your lowest point, you can make it to the other side. I'm living proof.

● Marion is supporting Cancer Research UK's Legacy Giving campaign. For more information about writing a gift in your will, visit [cruk.org/writeanend](http://cruk.org/writeanend)