

## Healthy Living

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By Chris Cash

Lucy McCarthy was born into a large loving family of seven brothers and four sisters living with mom and dad in Olin, North Carolina. After high school she moved to Washington, D.C. to work for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. There, she met her husband-to-be, Jack McCarthy, another FBI employee. They were married in 1954. Jack entered Augustana Seminary in 1955 to become a Lutheran minister and during the next several years they moved quite a bit due to Lucy's FBI job and Jack's ministries.

In 1973, Lucy McCarthy moved to beautiful Geneva, Illinois. Eight years later she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Her ordeal moved her to create "The Natural Woman," product and services to smooth the way for women and men who find themselves in the same situation she had been in.

The Natural Woman is a shop located in Lucy's home specializing in breast prostheses, custom fitted bras and all natural products to improve your health and feelings of well-being. She began selling prostheses and bras out of her family room in Geneva while working as a secretary in a development firm. Lucy spent a year researching how prostheses are made, how to properly fit them and what kind of bras hold them in place. In the late 1980s, Lucy dropped her full-time occupation and turned Natural Woman into a full time business still operating out of her family room; Lucy truly seems to understand the special needs of breast cancer survivors and offers a very private and caring environment. She believes that shopping for prostheses is not just cosmetic replacing the weight of a missing breast as well as its appearance keeps the body in balance and prevents back problems.

Many clients of Lucy's bring their husbands or boyfriends along to the appointments to help in the healing process. The experience is wonderful for couples struggling to adjust to the woman's changed body. Unfortunately, the divorce rate among mastectomy patients is unbelievably high. There are many women who are afraid to let the spouse see them after surgery, even though their husbands love them and want to help them. Lucy tries to encourage couples, making the experience less embarrassing and more loving.

Now, Lucy's client list tops over 3,000 and spans the Midwest. Though prostheses and bras are the bulk of her business, she has branched into swimwear, lingerie, herbal supplements and cosmetics. All of the products are designed to help cancer patients live life more comfortably. The specialty products she sells include moisturizing shampoos and body lotion for skin injured by radiation and chemotherapy as well as estrogen free makeup. Lucy said the researchers suspect high estrogen levels can trigger breast cancer.

"Cancer isn't just a disease, Lucy said, it invades your entire life." Lucy told me that sometimes it's not just the pain of surgery that gets people down. It's the sores on the skin or just feeling tired all the time.

The products in her studio along with Lucy's caring manner truly help; with all of these aspects. I really got a feeling from Lucy that she embraces people and helps to treat their mind, body, and spirit.

Speaking of spirit, Lucy's spirit is certainly something to admire. You can sense this in everything about her. From her delightful voice message you get when you call her shop (when she is with

clients, she doesn't answer the phone), to her charming sense of humor and triumph over tragedy philosophy.

Lucy is listed in the Millennium Edition of the Nationwide Register's Who's Who in Executives and Businesses. Her outstanding leadership ability and achievements have been recognized in both the Sterling and Continental Who's Who directories. Lucy is a Certified Fitter and she will do fittings in her home or the client's wherever is most comfortable. Her business practices follow her motto, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Lucy noted that many of her clients have said that buying a prosthesis from a woman who has one has really made a big difference. So many women have told her stories of feeling embarrassed and uncomfortable going to a regular store's lingerie department. Immediately upon stepping into Lucy's home you know it will be different. The feeling there is very warm and homey. I noticed a coffee table with a lot of information and inspiring reading materials. Lucy opened a large closet door and revealed to me stacks of bras in a vast array of sizes. Not only does she stock hard to find sizes, these bras are very beautiful as well.

In the room was also a large rack where many post-mastectomy swimsuits were hanging. Lucy really does her homework when it comes to researching products. She carries a top of the line air purifier that is not readily available in stores and line of natural vitamins and immune system boosters.

Many of her clients now include men who take advantage of these health enrichment products. Insurance companies may pay part of your medical supplies and Lucy is also happy to design a payment plan that suits your needs. Lucy said that the response she gets means more to her than the money she makes. "I feel I got cancer because God needed help helping other cancer patients," she said. "I feel privileged that I can touch the lives of people who have gone through what I went through and make them feel better about themselves," She considers her illness somewhat of a blessing; had she not had cancer, she would have missed out on helping so many people and building so many close relationships.

As I sat listening to Lucy's story, I couldn't help but thinking of the fact that although not all of us are in need of her services unfortunately, we probably know of a woman that does. Lucy has a great gift to offer, not only her caring and compassion but products that make a woman feel less like a cancer patient and more like a beautiful healthy person.

Lucy McCarthy often hugs her customers and they leave Natural Woman, not only a gesture of caring but also of understanding. Lucy is now a 22-year breast cancer survivor who is thriving in life and in her business. Lucy loves people and she's always eager to help, just give her a call. You can schedule a private appointment by calling 630-232-7434 during the day or evening.