

Touch

continued from D1

When I received my first massage at (training) school, it suddenly wasn't just an income – I wanted people to feel like I felt.

"I wanted to care for the people who nobody was touching."

Dean had been living in New York and built a practice focused on stress relief and muscle soreness. "Then we moved back to Florida, and I approached many doctors and finally connected to Dr. Gail Cooney. Gail came in and liked what I did and asked if I'd like to do massage therapy at Sari (Asher Center for Integrative Cancer Care) about five years ago."

Dean often treats patients who know they will soon die.

"I talk to them, being careful not to cross boundaries because I'm not a therapist. So I listen to them. And hold that place – that space – of love, compassion, nurturing. I focus on doing no harm, but instead doing conscious and gentle work to give some relief and imitate some level of freedom, no matter how temporary."

Dean looks away and begins to tear up. "And sometimes I just hold them. I literally hold them. I help them feel safe ... decreasing isola-



Lea Jefferson lauded Dean for her comforting sessions.

tion of the patient with all their mental struggles. I try to hush them away.

"I always see people as a whole, not by that piece that's missing," Dean exhales and wipes a tear from her cheek. "Massage is cumulative, and the effects can last and give relief for a couple days. And when they're in chemo, I tell them to lie down for treatment, breathe and to take in spirit. Visualize what does it feel like when they're on 'Anita's table' and replace that mindset of chemo with my table."

Lea Jefferson was diagnosed in August of 2012 and needed a double mastectomy, radiation and chemotherapy. At Sari Center, Jefferson had radiation in the a.m. and Dean massaged her in the afternoons. "After 32 rounds of radiation," says Jefferson, "I went in to see my doctors and they were blown away because my skin was supple and they could put in an implant. It's very rare for the skin to be that pliable, but massage changed it all."

Jefferson had also just lost her college roommate to breast cancer. "Anita was very spiritual – it was like going to a little slice

of heaven. She knew exactly where my grief was. Anita comforted me with healing hands, and she introduced me to coconut oil and aloe vera. Suddenly my skin just 'stayed' and the doctors were stunned. I can't express this enough. I was able to have reconstruction."

Dean says that "doctors deal with cancer and see the patient, doctors hold patients at arm's length but I teach them to touch themselves, by 'phluffing the girls' (bouncing their breasts)... It's hard to touch a scar or a space that once contained a breast, but they have to touch themselves for internal acceptance. And that's really hard to do."

Dean rises to demonstrate, "It's a gentle loving lifting up as though fluffing a pillow. From underneath and on the sides, 'phluffing' inward to midline, and then softly cupping hands around breasts in your palm."

"My husband, Robert, said to me the other day that 'there is something about you where you can treat people with cancer ... where you can wrap your hands around it and you're not afraid.' I've lost a lot of my people and we've really bonded, but my mom always said to me, 'We're born and we're gonna die.' The part of life that's my contribution is to help people live the best life they can, in

the time they have left."

When they're gone does she feel like she loses them? "No," she pauses, "they're still with me. When I see a well-dressed woman on the street, I think of my 'Judy Beauty,' as she dressed to the nines. When I see a marquee for a ballet, I think of my Ana the dancer. She was one of the first people I treated ... Tiny and frail, and hardened from radiation, I could only do hand and foot massage for her. And when I did..." Dean's jaw trembles, "I would hold her feet and think of all the performances she must have done with those sweet petite feet. Now she dances ... in heaven."

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Brit academy to honor Mirren

Associated Press

Oscar-winning actress Helen Mirren, whose roles have ranged from a hard-nosed detective to Queen Elizabeth II, is to receive the British Academy Film Awards' highest honor.

The academy announced recently that the 68-year-old will collect the BAFTA Fellowship at a London ceremony this month.

Chairman John Willis said Mirren was being honored "as one of the most outstanding actresses of her generation."

Previous fellowship recipients include Charlie Chaplin, Alfred Hitchcock, Elizabeth Taylor and Judi Dench. Mirren said that "to join that list of legendary names is overwhelming."

Mirren was acclaimed for her starring role in



Helen Mirren

the TV detective series "Prime Suspect" and won a best-actress Academy

Award in 2006 for playing Britain's monarch in "The Queen."

The awards ceremony will take place Feb. 16 at London's Royal Opera House.

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