

# W<sup>e</sup>nlightened Woman magazine.

**On The Cover...**  
Liz Holzemer

**Inspired?**  
The Company We Keep

**An Interview with**  
Gary Zukav & Linda Francis

**Breast Cancer Survivors**  
Dating After Mastectomy

Complimentary Issue  
Sept/Oct 2004

[www.enlightenedwomanmagazine.com](http://www.enlightenedwomanmagazine.com)

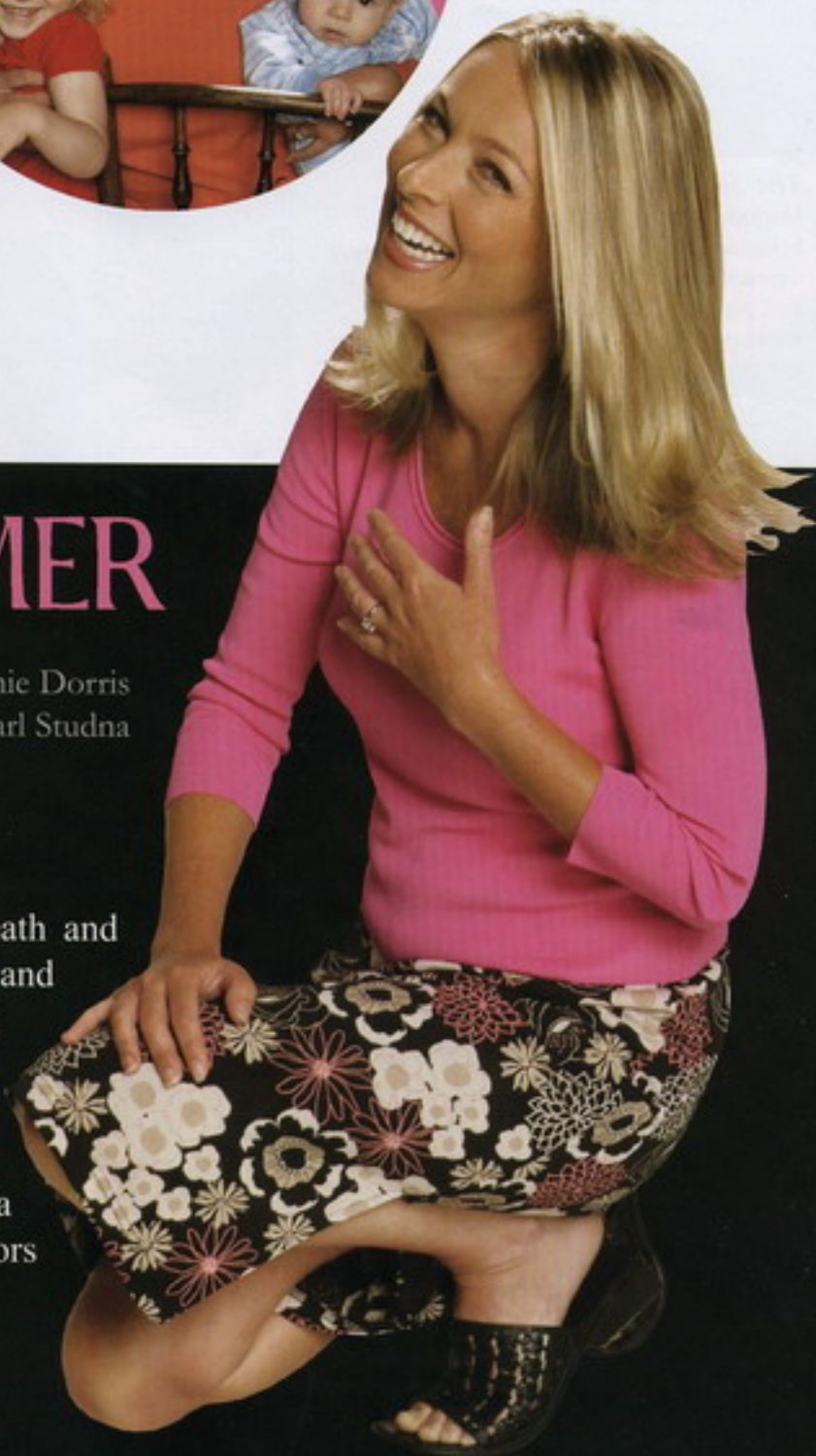
# On The Cover...



## LIZ HOLZEMER

written by Jennie Dorris  
photographs by Carl Studna

There aren't many women that face death and infertility and get through it with a joke and a laugh. But Liz Holzemer knows that her sense of humor, through two huge medical miracles, is what's put her in her self-proclaimed dream life – having survived a brain tumor, and becoming a mother to two miracle children that doctors told her she could never have...



(continued on page 12)

Things weren't so funny when Liz started to realize five years ago that something was wrong. After getting off of birth control to try to start a family, she discovered as the months passed that she had lost her cycle. Fertility specialist after specialist had no answers for her beyond that "her ovaries might have shut down." They told her that her only hope of getting pregnant was with in-vitro fertilization. With her husband away for work over the holidays, Liz went to spend time with her girl friends.

"It was the new millennium, and my best friends were there. I'm normally one to rush out and celebrate, but I felt like sitting inside, by myself all night," she says.

Soon after, Liz noticed that her migraines were becoming worse and worse and, out of gut instinct, got an MRI.

"I remember the next morning after the MRI," she says. "The sun hadn't even risen and it was one of those gray February mornings."

The doctors told her that she had meningioma, and Liz laughs remembering her first reaction. "I was like, what is that? Spell it out, I've never heard of it."

After Liz learned more about it, her sense of humor stayed true. "I learned that 65% of all meningioma cases affect women, and yet, of course, there has to be the word 'men' in the name."

Liz was rushed to see a neurosurgeon, who said, after reviewing her case, that he was shocked to see she that was even able to walk into his office. "He told my husband that if the tumor hadn't been detected when it was, that he would have gone to shake me awake one day in the morning and I would've already been in a coma."

Eight days later, Liz went into surgery and a large mass the size of a baseball was removed from her head. It had grown so much that it had pushed on her brain, possibly putting pressure on her pituitary gland and causing her period to stop.

"My husband used to be a professional baseball player, and I've always loved baseball. I guess I loved baseball so much that I just grew one in my head," she jokes.

The recovery period after the surgery wasn't easy for her, or for those around her. She was on many medications, and couldn't get through simple daily activities that she used to enjoy, like reading a newspaper.

"It was hell," she says. "But when my best friend, who was out helping me for a month after the surgery, told me that it was equally as hard on her and my husband, I realized that there needed to be a support group for people like me, and for caregivers like them."

However, something delayed her project – as Liz healed, she finally got her monthly cycle back, and in December she learned she was pregnant, despite the doctors' warnings that it was next to impossible.

"I waited to tell my husband for a little while," she confesses. "But I made him a special card that read 'Congratulations, Daddy to be.' He read the card and we just held each other and cried."

After the birth of her daughter Hannah, Liz started to focus on the idea of a Web site to give other meningioma sufferers a place to foster a community. In the course of having her daughter, Liz had discovered that two of her neighbors, directly across the street and next door, had been diagnosed with meningioma.

"I thought, if I can help someone in front of my nose that's just across the street, isn't there a way I could help others? I call it my Oprah 'aha' moment," she says.

Liz worked to build a Web site to help the diagnosed, the caregivers, and even the children involved with meningioma. She start-

ed playing with words that could be involved in the title of the organization, trying to make something fun out of a mouthful of a word.

"The guys helping me with the Web site wanted me to call it 'Brain Tumor Babes,'" she remembers with a laugh. "But I wanted to bring hope with my success of being able to have children. My children were my blessings – if I hadn't been monitoring my fertility so I could have them, I never would have caught the tumor."

The Web site was started in February of 2003, and already has around 650 "mommas" and "poppas" as Liz calls her users.

"These people have become my second family. We talk about the meningioma, and we also talk about our lives, as well," she says.

While Meningioma Mommas provides a sense of community, Liz is also using it to help raise money for more research. She's paired with a brain science foundation in Boston and has inspired research to begin on meningioma and its effect on women.

"I'm flying out there in October, and I've already raised \$8,000. My goal is to raise a million dollars to help with this research," she says.

And Liz still has her sense of humor in tact. On her Web site, [www.meningiomamommas.com](http://www.meningiomamommas.com), she has an entire section for "Tumor Humor," that laughs at different aspects of being diagnosed and recovering from meningioma. She also has a cookbook out titled "Feeding the Mind & Soul: It's More than Just a Cookbook" that includes funny recipes for brain freezes.

"Humor has always helped me soften the shock of what we're going through," she says.

Now 37, Liz has two children. Hannah is four-years-old, and her second child, Hunter, was just born on April 1<sup>st</sup> of this year.

"I look at my life, and I think I am *here*. I am so very grateful to be alive," she says.

## *2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Holiday Hope: A Benefit for Children Affected by Brain Tumors*

On October 1<sup>st</sup>, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Benefit that will take place at Slammers Baseball in Lakewood, Colorado.

Elizabeth Taylor and Olympic ice skater Scott Hamilton, both meningioma survivors, have donated signed items for the events. Also available are a variety of prizes, from Boulder Dinner Theater tickets to a Chop House gift certificate and a Flatirons Shopping Center gift certificate.

Tickets are \$20 each, and will pay for a night of fun at the batting cages and a Greek buffet. For more information, please contact Liz at [liz@meningiomamommas.com](mailto:liz@meningiomamommas.com).

Jennie Dorris is a freelance writer and columnist for Boulder's Daily Camera. She's also currently completing her Master's in music at the University of Colorado-Boulder, and plays with the Boulder Philharmonic and the Timberline and Longmont Symphonies.