



**DETERMINED:** Maggie and David will never give up

# 25 tumours and docs say I will die but I feel no pain because I'm surrounded BY LOVE

## Brave mum's six kids give her strength to fight cancer

### EXCLUSIVE

by **Antonia Hoyle**

**EVERY day in Maggie Thomas' home is mayhem, from the moment she's woken at dawn by her six kids climbing into her bed.**

There's the school run, karate classes and homework to organise, outings to take and packed lunches to prepare for Liam, 11, twins Danny and Anne, nine, David, seven, Cian, five, and Fintan, three.

But Maggie never complains – because looking after her family keeps her alive.

In January 2009 Maggie, 46, was told she had breast cancer.

Since then it has spread rapidly and today she has 25 tumours on her lungs, liver, spine, hips, ribs and brain.

But despite being warned it's incurable, she won't wallow in self-pity.

Maggie has cashed in her life insurance and remortgaged her home to raise the £100,000 she and devoted hubby David have spent so far on alternative remedies.

And supermum Maggie insists it's worth every penny, declaring: "I refuse to believe this cancer will kill me. My children give me strength and keep me happy because I'm desperate to see them grow up."

"I was given a year to live, so I've already survived longer than I was expected to."

### Daze

"And although I'm racing against time to save my life, I know I can do it."

She added: "I'm surrounded by love – and if the love of my family could cure me, I'd be better already."

When Maggie, of Harlington, Beds, was first diagnosed she was told she'd have to have her right breast removed.

She said: "I cried in disbelief and that night David and I sat in a daze."

Maggie and photographer David, 45, decided not to tell the kids about her disease because she thought the cancer had been beaten.

She kept the mastectomy quiet too and hid it by stuffing her bra with socks – and later with chicken fillets.

But after two months a scan revealed five tumours in her liver – and Maggie's oncologist warned her it was terminal.

She said: "We were devastated and I demanded to know how long I had."

"She said under a year, though chemotherapy could give me up to 18 months."

"But the side effects were severe and I knew I'd waste precious days feeling sick when I could be playing with the children. I decided to find another way."

Maggie broke the news to her kids. She said: "Liam, Danny and Anne knew what cancer was because one of their teachers had died from it. But David, Cian and Fintan sat in silence, confused."

"My eyes welled up as I told them I'd fight the illness as hard as I could."

Maggie was put on the anti-cancer drug Herceptin and in September 2009 had

surgery on the liver tumours. She also went to Dr Etienne Callebout, a traditional and alternative medicine specialist.

He put her on a diet of mainly raw food, banned dairy, sugar and red meat and prescribed a daily cocktail of 240 pills and tonics to boost her immune system.

At the same time Maggie took up reiki and cranial-osteopathy for pain relief.

The cost of her alternative treatments was more than £5,000 a month.

David, who wed Maggie 15 years ago, said: "She cashed in her life insurance, we took out several bank loans and we remortgaged the house."

"I was determined to do everything to support her – I chased her for eight years before we married and couldn't imagine

life without her. There were times I wanted to break down but she was so strong I got strength from her."

"And we tried not to get too steeped in cancer by watching comedies like Fawlty Towers or reminiscing about our honeymoon motorbiking across Europe."

### Cracked

But the cancer spread to Maggie's hips, ribs, spine and lungs.

In a desperate bid to halt it, she agreed to take low-dose chemotherapy tablets.

Maggie said: "They gave me cracked skin and made me vomit – but whenever I felt low the children cheered me up." And the youngsters dealt with her illness in different ways. Maggie said: "Liam is a

deep thinker and always has five books on the go. Being the oldest, he was the first to realise how little time I had left."

"But he wanted to protect the others and kept it to himself."

The twins were more pragmatic. Maggie said: "I was doing the school run one day when Danny and Anne started discussing what they should do were I to suddenly die while we were in the car."

"Anne said she'd take the steering wheel and Danny should control the brakes."

"Danny said maybe they should put me in the boot. It was so unexpected we all started laughing. Danny's a comedian and had all the kids playing catch with the "chicken fillets" I use as my right breast. But I worry he's using humour to disguise

## MY LITTLE MIRACLES

Maggie says her six kids are the inspiration for her brave battle



My son Cian rubs my tummy as he thinks that will cure me

Pictures: NEWSPICS

his fear." David junior was direct and inquisitive. She said: "He asked if he would have to wait until he was in Heaven to see me if I died - which broke my heart."

"Cian is sweet. He rubs my tummy because he thinks it will cure me."

"Fintan is only three so he doesn't understand as much - but I'm determined to live until he's old enough to remember me."

She added: "My children are Catholic like me. They believe in Heaven and I've told them if I die I'll be watching over them."

David often had to take time off work to help out and the debts mounted.

The kids' school and Handicapped Children Pilgrimage Trust pitched in with £12,000 from fund-raising events, which paid for two family trips to Lourdes. Family and friends also rallied

round. But this year the liver tumours returned and Maggie had to stop the Herceptin because it was damaging her heart. Worse still, the chemo tablets had failed to shrink the tumours in her lungs and bones and NHS doctors told her they could only offer her more chemo.

At Dr Callebout's suggestion, she contacted a clinic in Nidda, central Germany, who claim using 113°F heat lamps can kill cancer cells.

### Cure

The £30,000 treatment isn't recognised in Britain. Maggie said: "NHS doctors didn't acknowledge it as a treatment for me but it's been proven to help cure terminally ill people."

Last month she had her first treatment and must wait a couple of weeks to see if it worked. But a scan there also revealed the cancer had

spread to her brain - although Maggie insists she isn't scared because the clinic told her they can treat it with radiation therapy.

She said: "I now have to decide if that's something I want to do."

Meanwhile, she and David have discussed what he will do if the worst happens.

Maggie said: "I'd like him to find someone else - it's important for him to be happy and for the children to have a mother figure."

But she plans to make the most of every minute she has left. She said: "I want to watch the kids make camps in the hedgerows and read *The Gruffalo* to them before they go to bed. I'm surrounded by love - and I actually feel very lucky."

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