





# Winning the War on Cancer

A blitz of medical breakthroughs may end this deadly disease once and for all

BY LORI MILLER KASE

AS A NURSE, Ginger Empey knew how grim her prognosis was when, at 50, she was diagnosed with breast cancer that had already spread to other parts of her body. She had a mastectomy, but when chemotherapy failed to touch the golf-ball-sized tumors on her liver, the doctors told her to “get her affairs in order.”

“I couldn’t believe that three months into the disease, there was nothing available to me,” Empey recalls. Fortunately for her, UCLA’s Dennis J. Slamon, MD, a pioneer in the use of the

next generation of cancer treatments, was about to begin recruiting patients for the final stage of a study to test a new breast cancer drug. Herceptin, which targets the gene defect that is responsible for about a quarter of all breast cancer cases, would supposedly fix the biological problem at the root of Empey’s disease. It worked. Today, little evidence can be found of the aggressive cancer that led doctors to give Empey a death sentence 11 years ago. “My recovery was miraculous,” she says.