



***LIVING WITH
LYMPHOMA;
MY CANCER
JOURNEY***

by
Benjamin Aaron Ross

Cancer sucks!

Let's face it, cancer sucks! No doubt about it, it just plain sucks. I don't know anyone who wouldn't agree. Cancer isn't something we plan to get, it isn't something we aim for in life, and it certainly isn't a choice. It is dumped on us at a moment's notice, like getting unexpectedly whopped upside the head. For me, I chose to deal with it head-on, always in the fighting mode, never giving up, making the most of life and enjoying it to the fullest.

I was flattered and honored when Dr. Andrei Shustov of Seattle Cancer Care Alliance (SCCA) first asked me to write this story. He also told me that, with my permission, he'd like to post it on the T-cell Leukemia Lymphoma Foundation website, a foundation which he created and of which he is president. To me I was like any other patient, hoping for a cure, to beat cancer and to kick it to the curb. But to Dr. Shustov I was courageous, positive, and a fighter who never gave up. He asked that I share my story in hopes of making a positive impact on others faced with lymphoma. So to honor Dr. Shustov's request and to hopefully make a difference in just one person's life, I'll take you through my eleven-month cancer battle which I chose to call "Living with Lymphoma; My Cancer Journey".

Kauai, Hawaii – November 2012



My wife, Tina, and I spent a week in Kauai celebrating my 50th birthday. Lots of fun, sun and relaxation was had including an amazing medium rare steak dinner at the Grand Hyatt on Poipu Beach.

I'd been coughing for a month or so prior to the trip. After patiently waiting for the cough to go away, a visit to my internal medicine doctor resulted in him saying, "It's probably just viral and needs to run its course." He sent me home, and I continued to cough. I paid another visit to the doctor just before our trip to Hawaii with the same cough and the doctor decided a shot of penicillin in the "backside" would do the trick. Not so, the cough continued throughout the vacation and even when we returned home to rainy Washington. It didn't ruin our vacation, but it sure was irritating.

Reality set in that vacation was over, and back to work I went. Since I'd just celebrated my 50th birthday, it was time for that all-important 50th birthday present, a colonoscopy. I sailed through the "look-see" with flying colors. No colon cancer for me!

Learning that I had cancer – December 20, 2012

For approximately two weeks after our return from Hawaii my symptoms continued to increase; mostly just more intense coughing, though I was now throwing up, which was no fun at all. Oh, and I experienced night sweats, soaking the sheets every night. At this point they thought it was an allergic reaction to a new medication, but after a CT scan they found that my spleen was grossly enlarged. A couple of swollen lymph nodes on the right side of my neck caused them to believe that I had mononucleosis. A rapid mono test came back negative, but they sent a blood sample off to the lab for more in depth testing. That too came back negative. An infectious disease doctor grilled me about my medical history. No drinking, no smoking, no drugs, and I worked out at the gym five to six days a week. I was healthy as a horse. He questioned me about my personal and work travel history. It appeared I was a medical mystery. Had I contracted "Cat Scratch Fever" (yes, there really is such a disease) or some other weird illness? No, everything seemed to be fine from the infectious disease



doctor's assessment. I went in to have a needle biopsy of a lymph node in my neck to rule out or confirm lymphoma. I told the interventional radiologist that lymph nodes in my left arm pit and groin were also swollen. Since it was safer to perform the biopsy of a lymph node in my arm pit, they chose to do that instead. It was through this procedure that we learned I had Peripheral NOS T-cell non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (say that ten times fast, I dare ya!).

December 20, 2012 was the day I was whopped upside the head with the news that at the age of 50, I had cancer. I said to my doctor, "Well, let's get on with this, I have fish to catch." As I walked out of the doctor's office hand-in-hand with my wife, she said to me "Failure is not an option." Our new chant quickly became, "Failure is not an option, too many fish to catch."



My wife and I sat dumb founded in the car, shed a few tears, then headed home. It was just five days before Christmas, and we had to find a way to tell our 19 year old daughter that I had cancer... Not an easy feat for dad and mom to do when cancer was something that happened to "other families," not ours. After the initial shock wore off, we settled into a fighting mode. YES, we would beat this cancer! We called our three exchange student daughters from Mongolia, Japan and Brazil to let them know we were in a fight for my life. We said that dad was going to be okay, that we lived in the best place in the world, Seattle, with cutting edge technology and cancer research at our finger tips. How lucky was I? I also had the arms of the world wrapped around me, cheering me on to victory... The ultimate goal remission and then a stem cell transplant. There wasn't anything that was going to stop me from winning my cancer battle.

My cancer journey begins – December 28, 2012

From day one I never allowed myself a pity party. I never asked "why me?" or got angry. I accepted the hand I was dealt and made the best of a very difficult and scary situation. My wife, ever so organized and efficient, allowed me to focus on enjoying life while she took care of countless doctor's appointments, oversaw my medication management, and made sure I ate healthy foods. Most importantly she advocated for me every step of the way. My daughter Hannah made me laugh, smile and keep up my constant joking and teasing... I never gave her a moment's rest. Yes Hannah, you were born from a chicken alongside the road.

I'd never been poked and prodded so much in my life. Multiple blood draws, a bone marrow biopsy, and an EKG just to name a few. They were making sure I was healthy enough to start chemo treatments, as well as preparing me for surgery to place my power port. They also planned to remove a lymph node to reconfirm the specific type of lymphoma that I had. It was through a bone marrow biopsy that we learned I was Stage IVB. But, good news! Only 10% of my bone marrow was involved. From the way I looked at it, I was a quarter of a way to victory and 10% bone marrow involvement would be a slam dunk to get rid of!



Three days after all of the poking and prodding I was whisked off to the surgery room. And a short three days later I was having my first round of Cyclophosphamide, Hydroxydaunorubicin, Oncovin, and Prednisone (CHOP) chemotherapy regimen through the port, amazing! We wasted no time telling my cancer who was boss!

CHOP chemotherapy – January 4, 2013



With six rounds of CHOP chemo, one round every three weeks, I was going to kick cancer to the curb. I sailed through CHOP with flying colors and had very little to no side effects. After the first round I no longer looked like I had a “Rambo” neck... I was back to normal, of sorts. But boy I have to tell you, the “P” in CHOP is nasty stuff! Man oh man does Prednisone taste bad. I discovered that chasing it with apple juice made it much more bearable, so we always made sure we had that on-hand when we were heading into the next round of chemo.

Did I say little to no side effects? Yes I did, and it’s true. Of course I was already bald, so I didn’t have the worry of some about losing the hair on my head, but I did lose it everywhere else. In fact, funny enough I even had a co-worker ask me if I lost my pubic hair. Really???? I just had to laugh. So I said to him, “What do you think?” I figured I might as well keep him guessing. I had the last laugh, ha!



Halfway through the CHOP and a follow-up PET scan showed that my cancer was shrinking. YES! I was winning this cancer battle. I was getting back to the gym several times a week for a light workout and people were amazed at my strength while going through chemo. My wife and I also spent a lot of time at local parks and beaches, the fresh air and sunshine was rejuvenating and it gave us time to talk and reflect on everything that we had to be thankful for.

There’s always a silver lining

There’s always a silver lining, sometimes you just have to look a little harder to find it. I have so much to be thankful for. One of which is that Hannah was home for Christmas break from school (she attended a music conservatory in New York City) when we learned that I had cancer. We didn’t have to talk to her over the phone or Skype to tell her that her dad had cancer. She was there for me every step of the way as we walked this cancer journey. She was home for my surgery and first chemotherapy treatment, taking the mystery, fear and anxiety out of the picture for her. When it was time for her to return to school, my message was “You have a job to do, and I have a job to do. Go get smart while I kick cancer’s butt.” I know walking away from our home and returning to school wasn’t easy for Hannah, and I am incredibly proud of her.

Thankful for family, friends, co-workers and Facebook

I hesitate to write this portion of my cancer journey for fear that I may leave out someone who was kind, generous, or caring during my battle with lymphoma. So, here goes... Along with a big apology to anyone that I may leave out.

I don’t come from a large family and I choose my friends carefully. There are several noteworthy people that lifted my spirits, cheered me on, and made my cancer journey a little brighter.



Of course most importantly my wife and daughter, whom I will share with you throughout my cancer journey. As well as my daughters from Mongolia, Japan, and Brazil who were in my corner every step of the way.

My in-laws, Jim and Marsha, were wonderful. Ask and we shall receive. There's nothing better than what we started referring to as "grandma food"; high calorie, high fat, high protein meals that could be popped into the oven after a long day at the doctor. I could write a book on the support they provided to my wife and me.

My boss, Don, the first person to visit me after my diagnosis, who took me to lunch and to see his boat in La Conner, as well as a crabbing trip on his boat. I'll share more on that later.

My brother Bill, who stayed in our home on and off over the course of eleven months, taking care of our pets during late-night runs to the emergency room, hospital stays, or long days at the doctor, not to mention grocery store runs and odd chores around the house.

My co-workers who sent greeting cards of well wishes along with a gift card to Cabela's (my favorite store), a gift certificate for dinner at a bistro, and cash to fund fishing charter trips which I'll also share more about with you later. There were also numerous phone calls and visits by co-workers (e.g. Greg, Dick and Steve). Their generosity and caring truly made a difference.

My fishing friends Danyon, Doug, Mike and Steve... Many visits with great conversations, a trip or two to IHOP, amazing fishing trips shared on my boat and the river during my cancer fight, and old fish stories (some long and tall). In addition, Mike prepared our Thanksgiving turkey, deep fat fried. Yum!

My dad Fred, who visited numerous times at home and the hospital, always offering words of encouragement and sharing special memories. He also kept my boat maintenance up to date and the Mustang Grande that I restored running smoothly.



And last but not least, social media. Facebook is an amazing tool. I could quickly update everybody on my cancer journey, sharing all the positive experiences in something that was sometimes, well, icky. People's support through social media was amazing. They appreciated my updates and positive attitude, and I appreciated them! I have way too many Facebook friends to name them all, so it will suffice to say that they know who they are. They made a huge difference.

Television to pass the time

I'll never forget the look on my mother-in-law's face when I responded to her comment "Ben, should you really be watching that?" You see, early on in my diagnosis my wife continued to go to work so my mother-in-law was at our home every day to help out. I became a television watcher and discovered the TV show Breaking Bad. When my mother-in-law said to me, "Ben, should you really be watching that?" I responded, "Why not, I don't have lung cancer. I'm not going to die, and I'm not going to cook meth." When I told my wife this story, she never laughed so hard.

Pawn Stars, The Walking Dead, and home remodel shows quickly became time fillers when I wasn't at doctor's appointments, fishing, or going on some kind of outdoor adventure. My wife hated The Walking Dead, a show that my brother got me hooked on, so she always managed to find something else to do when we had our "brother bonding time" watching people get eaten alive.

Spring Break - March 2013

Hannah returned home from school for Spring Break, and we had several family adventures planned. Most important, Hannah and I built custom fishing poles together. It was a great father-daughter project. We both built river fishing rods over the course of the two weeks. Just Hannah and me, and some much needed one-on-one time.



We also went on many walks and visits to the beach. One of my favorite pictures with Hannah is at Deception Pass State Park. It was a beautiful spring day so we walked on the beach and took advantage of some great photo opportunities.



Cough, cough and more cough - March 27, 2013

The irritating cough just didn't want to go away. I learned that lymphatic fluid was building up in the pleural lining of my left lung. I'm not one to be real big on taking lots of pain medications, but did find that Homatropine stopped the coughing and allowed me to get much needed rest. I ended up having six thoracentesis procedures over the course of three months and eventually had surgery to fuse the pleural lining, a pleurodesis, so that lymphatic fluid would no longer gather there. My vocabulary was fast growing, or maybe I should say my wife's vocabulary was fast growing. She knew my medical history inside out and often doctors and nurses would ask her if she



was in the medical field. Nope, she was just organized, paid attention, and wanted nothing but the best for me. Man was I lucky the day I married her, on December 28, 1986. Yes, eight days after my diagnosis we celebrated our 26th wedding anniversary at Anthony's Homeport Restaurant in Everett. This was the same day that I had all that poking and prodding in preparation for my first surgery to place the power port. Happy 26th Anniversary, dear.

The pleurodesis was a success! The coughing went away, hallelujah!!!! I did have lots of lung exercises to do both at the hospital and home, but I gave my daughter some serious competition. She had her bassoon and I had an acapella. I teased her about pushing her out of her position in the Manhattan School of Music (MSM) orchestra. Lung and coughing problems solved, I was off to finish up a few more rounds of CHOP at Virginia Mason (VM). I held my breath, (well not really) that this CHOP stuff was going to get me into remission and off to Fred Hutch for a stem cell transplant.

Shopping at Cabela's and flowers for my wife – April 2013



I finished up the CHOP and was leading what I would call a semi-normal life. I still didn't have the energy to get back to work, but I did have the strength to do some all-important shopping. I headed off to Cabela's to spend the gift card that my co-workers gave me. My purchase, a reel for my newly built fishing pole of course! I also brought tears to my wife's eyes, in a good way. I was able to drive to the store while she was at work one day and I surprised her with roses. I often bought her flowers in the past and hadn't done so in a while. Needless to say, I scored brownie points that day. YES!



From Manhattan to Montana; that's my girl! – May 2013

Hannah returned from New York City in May, finishing up her 2nd year at MSM. Not long after returning, she announced to my wife and me that she didn't want to return to the music conservatory. Surprised? No, not really. As much as she loved her music, she decided it wasn't what she wanted to do for the rest of her life. She obviously was talented, but not happy. I think it was a combination of seeing dad fight cancer, thinking about her future, and realizing it was important that she find something that was going to make her fulfilled and happy. Her mom and I were okay with that, we supported her 110%. So six weeks later, after checking out and applying to several universities she landed herself at Montana State University (MSU). From Manhattan to Montana, we now have a Hannah Montana, ha! Take note that my stocking cap, to keep my bald head warm, went from "MSM" to "MSU" from there on out. I'm one proud daddy, of his not-so-little girl.

Halibut fishing at La Push – May 2013



Halibut season is very limited, only about two weeks every year for a recreational fisherman. La Push or Bust! My first trip to La Push was with Mike and a couple of his friends over a long weekend. A six hour road trip and a three hour boat ride out to our favorite halibut hole, and thirty minutes later we had our limit. Yes, only thirty minutes to catch our limit and a three hour boat ride back to the dock to clean our fish. Repeat for three days and we had several ice chests full of fresh halibut and ling cod to bring home.

My second halibut trip was the following weekend. Since my daughter was home from school for the summer, she and my friend Mike and I got up at 2am and headed for La Push. We launched the boat, once again headed 3 hours out on the open ocean, caught our limit and returned to the dock to clean the fish. Instead of staying the night, we drove home that same day. I was so happy, but so tired that I could barely make it into the house. It was so worth it. I sat down on the couch for a few minutes and before I knew it I had fallen asleep sitting up. My wife had to wake me



up and hold me while I walked to the bedroom. I slept with my fishing clothes on, on her side of the bed that night... Too many steps to get to my side of the bed! Let's just say, I didn't have to dream of fish that night, I made my dream a reality that day.

Returning to work – May 24, 2013



Six rounds of CHOP completed and I felt like I never had cancer. Well maybe I was a little run down, but I still felt on top of the world! I went back to work on the flight line in Everett, certifying and ticketing aircraft for Boeing so that the airlines could take delivery of their flying machines. It was amazing to have a two ton weight lifted off my shoulders. Yes, yes, yes! I was winning the battle.

My doctor at VM was pleased with the CHOP results and felt that the scans showed I was either in remission, or darn close and ready to be referred to SCCA. I felt fortunate and blessed to live in the Pacific Northwest with SCCA and Fred Hutch practically at my back door. Next stop SCCA.

SCCA – June 3, 2013

VM used the first line of treatment (CHOP) for a person diagnosed with lymphoma, and now it was time for Dr. Shustov to work his magic. After repeated tests at SCCA, including another bone marrow biopsy (which Dr. Shustov performed himself while my wife watched, crazy lady!) I learned that I wasn't even close to being in remission. Disappointed, yes. Hopeful, absolutely! Who wouldn't be with Dr. Shustov on their team! He had quite an impressive resume, as my wife researched him prior to our first appointment. No second rate doctors for me!

Being a patient at SCCA meant having access to trial medications, something you couldn't get at VM. I had several more tests, went through a randomizer, and was selected for a trial med called Alisertib. I jokingly referred to myself as, "Lab Rat #15." This was an extra shot at finding the key to unlocking my cancer, and an opportunity to help with research and finding a cure for lymphoma. I was excited to take the meds at home, no longer having to sit in a chemo chair like with the CHOP. Don't get me wrong, the nurses and support staff that oversaw the chemo transfusions are amazing people, but I had a life to live and fish to catch so everyday away from SCCA was sure to be a great one.

I joked with Dr. Shustov one time about being his "model patient" for Alisertib. You see, he was heading to Europe for a cancer forum. I told him he could take me along, put me on one of those pedestals that spins around, and talk about the trial med I was on, all while I smiled and acted like the perfect patient. To this day, I'm not quite sure why he didn't "bite" at the opportunity for me to join him. I even brought the idea up again the next time I saw him just to make sure he wasn't interested. No go, I was stuck at home in Washington while he traveled to Europe to get smart about T-cell lymphoma and treatment options. Lucky him!

Expensive Therapy – June 2013

Did I mention that I LOVE to fish? No? Well I do. I'm an avid fisherman of salmon, halibut, ling cod, and Dungeness crab. Working at Boeing as a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Designee on the



flight line merely feeds and funds my habit of spending as much time as possible on the Puget Sound and local rivers fishing.

This is where “Expensive Therapy” came into the picture. Expensive Therapy is my dream boat. A 22’ Thunder Jet Alexis Offshore aluminum boat with a full hardtop and a 175HP Suzuki outboard engine. This boat is made for fishing! I’ve owned many boats in the past and zeroed in on this beauty a few years back. Six months into my cancer battle, my wife and I decided to purchase my dream boat, kind of a “focus on the ball” approach, but instead it was “focus on the boat.”

So we purchased the boat, brand new of course, and I couldn’t wait to show Dr. Shustov pictures at my next appointment with him. That’s when I learned of his passion for scuba diving and underwater photography, both expensive hobbies. Subsequent doctor’s appointments frequently included stories of my fishing adventures and Dr. Shustov shared upcoming planned scuba diving trips.

So, how did I come up with “Expensive Therapy” for the name of my new boat? Well, it’s a combination of the boat being expensive, really expensive, and my chemotherapy treatments of course. We thought the name Expensive Therapy was a great way to mark this major event in my life with a great name that made us smile and laugh. It also generated lots of great conversations with other fishermen.



Expensive Therapy’s maiden voyage was a ling cod fishing trip with my friend Doug. We launched at Washington Park out of Anacortes and headed for Cypress Island. We brought home three fish that day. Hannah, my tried and true fishing buddy, was along to help christen the boat.



This fishing trip was just one of countless trips I would make throughout the summer and fall of 2013 with family and friends. Dr. Shustov will attest to the fact that every appointment at SCCA contained the, “Is it OK for me to go fishing?” question. Sometimes I would get a “No, you should wait until your blood numbers recover”, sometimes it was “Yes, as long as you can get to a hospital quickly, if needed”, and sometimes it was a 100% thumbs-up response. Shush, don’t tell... There were a couple of times when I wasn’t supposed to go fishing, but I did anyway. Here, fishy fishy.

Ironman – June 2013

Having cancer is like competing in an Ironman and trying to beat cancer to the finish line. In June of 2013 I competed in an Ironman. Well, not really. My fishing buddy and friend Danyon competed in his first Ironman at the ripe old age of 47. He told me before he headed to the race in Coeur d' Alene, Idaho that I’d be competing along next to him, in spirit, the whole way. First swimming, then biking, and finally running to finish out the race. It was about ¾ of the way into the Ironman that my cheering paid off. Danyon reached the point where his legs were burning and he was telling himself, “I can’t run any longer.” That’s when Danyon thought about me and everything that I’d been going through in my cancer journey. He shed a tear or two and pushed on, with me sitting on his shoulder (not literally) cheering him onto the finish line. “We” finished the race that day, with a very respectful time for a couple of old farts. We were champions!

Cancer knocks you down, keep getting back up – July 26, 2013



My wife often likened me to one of those punching bags that we all had as a kid. You know what I'm talking about, the kind with the sand in the bottom that you blew up until you felt like you were going to pass out. Every time you punched the bag it just came right back up for another hit. Well that was me, a punching bag and nothing was going to keep me down.

It was our daughter's 20th birthday at the end of July, so I planned a family fishing trip to Sekiu for the king salmon run. Expensive Therapy was going to do some rockin' and rollin' on the big waves out near the mouth of the ocean. We caught fish on our first two days of the trip, but a high fever sent us packing. At lightning speed, my wife drove us to Seattle with Expensive Therapy in tow, no way was she stopping at a small town hospital along the way. It was University of Washington (UW) Medical Center emergency room and Dr. Shustov or bust!

Danyon met us at the Edmonds Ferry landing and took Hannah and Expensive Therapy home. What a GREAT friend to help us out at a moment's notice and in a time of need!



Meanwhile, my wife drove me in his car to the hospital, all the while obeying the speed limit... NOT!

It turned out everything was fine, well kind of. I ended up with a hernia from all of the coughing early on in my diagnosis. Yep, on top of cancer I now had a hernia. Go figure! A week later, after a CT scan to make sure the hernia wasn't strangulated, I ended up in the hospital with a high fever. Eight days later I was finally released. This was one of those not-so-pleasant hospital experiences. I won't bore you with the details but let's just say I ended up at VM, and am thankful that they found a way to communicate with Dr. Shustov at SCCA/UW. My daughter made a bad experience quite funny when she arrived at the hospital for a visit with her Big Bang Theory "Soft Kitty" blanket. It spurred many fun conversations and lots of laughs during my hospital stay.

Oh well, like I said, I'm a punching bag and nothing was going to get me down. Punch, punch, punch, whop! And, of course a laugh or two. And I'm back up and standing.

National Marrow Donor Program; Be the Match Registry

My wife has been on the National Marrow Donor Program, Be the Match Registry since 1990. She's never been "called to duty" and well, now she's too old. But, let's keep that between us! The really cool thing is she still gets emails and Facebook posts about the registry. They were encouraging college students to host a "Spit Party". My wife made a post on Facebook and encouraged all of her friends to consider hosting a Spit Party. Karen, a childhood friend of our daughter, held a Spit Party at the University of Portland. A quick swab of the cheek and maybe, just maybe, someday Karen or one of her friends will be a perfect match for a leukemia or lymphoma patient and will save someone's life.

Dr. Shustov wanted to start the process to find my stem cell donor match, as he was confident that I would get into remission. A blood draw from both of my parents and my daughter (who hates needles and almost passed out) and I were required to ensure the HLA typing was thorough so they could find the best match possible. I learned from Fred Hutch that I not only had one perfect 10 of 10 match on the registry, but multiple perfect matches somewhere in the world. Some people never find a match. The fact that there were three people willing to give life to me was incredible! My wife cried tears of joy and happiness that day, and we breathed a sigh of relief knowing it was one less thing we had to worry about.



Is Alisertib the key to my cancer?

I know you'd probably find it hard to believe, but I was heading out with my wife to go salmon fishing in mid-August when I learned that the Alisertib wasn't working. It wasn't the key to unlocking my cancer. That high fever I had a couple of weeks ago that kept me in the hospital for eight days was an indication that the Alisertib wasn't working. Dr. Shustov called with the PET scan results, post VM hospital stay, and said there was a significant increase in lymph node involvement. We had gone in the wrong direction.



We were supposed to be kicking cancer to the curb, and instead I had gotten worse. But you know, I was okay with that. I contributed to research and without willing people like me they'll never find a cure. And that day I caught two salmon, which made a crummy day much better. And some really nice people at the boat dock shared some of their Dungeness crab with us, how could we complain?

Dr. Shustov still had a few tricks in his bag. Ifosfamide, Carboplatin, and Etoposide (ICE) chemo regimen or Romidepsin were the choices. We opted for ICE. I was still strong and somewhat physically fit, considering all of the cancer treatments I had gone through. ICE, an aggressive in-patient chemo, was going to be my ticket to paradise. Soon I'd be heading off to transplant and after recovery, a vacation in one of those grass huts jetting out over the waters of Tahiti.

ICE – August and September 2013

I sailed through ICE pretty easily. I spent three days in the hospital for each



round. I had little to no side effects after round one. Lots of walking the chemo floor at UW hospital helped make the time go by faster, and the staff was absolutely amazing. My wife always stayed with me at the hospital, never leaving my side. My daughter came to hang out with me, watch TV, and walk laps around the 7th floor.





I did have a “little” distraction just prior to the second round of ICE. You see, I have a history of getting kidney stones. In fact, I spent a month in San Antonio for work a couple of years ago and passed five kidney stones in two days! I’ve had a couple that sent me to the emergency room, but always managed to pass them on my own. Well, not this time. The stone was stuck and wasn’t going to come out on its own. So off to surgery I went, one day prior to starting round two of ICE. They were going to try and remove it with a “basket”, but it was a no go, it was too big to remove and couldn’t be broken up with a laser. They placed a stint between my right kidney and bladder to make sure I didn’t get an infection. Another one-two-three punch and I’m back up and standing.

Off to round two of ICE with really no issues to speak of. I did have to get a blood transfusion, but those were easy. No big deal. Waiting for the blood to arrive from Puget Sound Blood Center was what takes the longest. But again, I’m patient and many other people had bigger problems than me.

My exchange student daughter, Bia came from Brazil for a ten-day visit during a break in school. She visited me at the hospital during ICE round two. We shared a pizza dinner, and I made her laugh and laugh and laugh. She was fearful that her American dad wasn’t going to make it, that cancer was going to win. I assured her that I had the very best doctors, nurses, and support staff on my team and that nothing was going to get me down.



A few days before her departure back to Brazil, we had beautiful fall weather and she got to go fishing on Expensive Therapy. I have memories of her standing on the bow of the boat like in the movie “Titanic” with her hair blowing in the wind and a big smile on her face. And, I taught her how to shoot a gun! Well, not a real gun but a pellet gun. We got some great pictures, had some great laughs, and made special memories. I got a great big hug and an “I love you dad” when it was time for her to return home to Brazil.

It was a couple of weeks after my second round of ICE that Dr. Shustov ordered another PET scan to see if I was having a positive response. Well crap, crap and more crap! After two rounds of ICE, I learned that it didn’t work. Some of the lymph nodes got smaller and some got larger. Time to go “fishing” for something different to try. What did Dr. Shustov have in store for me next?

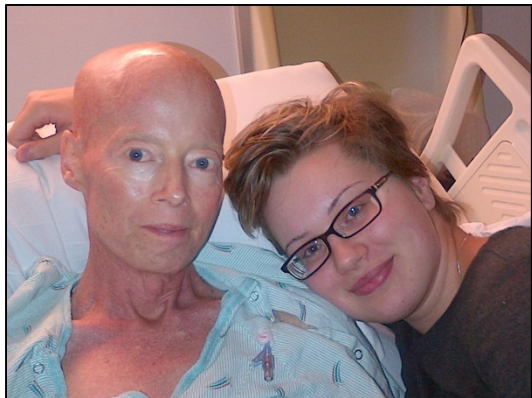


Romidepsin – October 2013

Romidepsin, or Romi for short, was the answer. As Dr. Shustov explained, “We’re going to turn off your ‘computer’, like a hard reboot and turn it back on again”. He told me that other patients had a positive response to Romi and continued on maintenance for many years. I was confident this was the key to unlocking my cancer, the

missing piece of the puzzle and would give researchers and Dr. Shustov time to find a cure for the cancer that was trying to knock me down. Romi was easy, a four hour sit in a chemo chair at SCCA. No more three-day inpatient chemo treatments at UW hospital, which left more time for fishing and living life.

9-1-1 scare – October 4, 2013



So this part of my journey I don't remember well, so I trust my wife for the facts here. I'd been through one round of Romi and was on pain meds and anti-nausea meds. She tried to wake me up one morning and I was incoherent; I mean way, way out of it. Enough so that it was time for her to call 9-1-1 and have me transported to the UW emergency room.

I learned later that the emergency room doctors thought that I wasn't going to make it. All indications were that my health was failing and cancer was winning. My wife started making plans to bring me home so I could pass in the comforts of our home, and our daughter flew back immediately from school in Montana.

A couple of days later, lo and behold, I snapped out of it like nothing ever happened. The attending doctors figured I'd had some kind of drug interaction or overdose. Holy cow, did my wife try to kill me? NOT! All I know is Dr. Shustov, along with Karen (SCCA PA) and Beatrice (SCCA nurse), paid me a visit at the hospital and said, "We're going into round two of Romi."

To this day we're not sure what happened, maybe it was just a perfect storm. My wife gave me all of my meds as prescribed and even kept track of the doses and when they were given to me. Oh well, all I knew was that I wanted to get the heck out of the hospital so that I could go fishing and crabbing. A quick paracentesis to drain the lymphatic fluid from my abdominal cavity, one of several I had throughout my cancer battle, and I was finally released from the hospital. Later in my cancer journey I would have a pleurex drain tube surgically placed so my private nurse, a.k.a. my wife, could drain the fluid every day.



The day after my release, back out on the water I went. I think I irritated the attending docs at UW a bit with my determination to get out of the hospital and onto the water, but oh well. We hauled in a nice load of Dungeness crab the next day. Life was good!



Fresh air and family time – October, 2013

With the recent 9-1-1 scare and my daughter's return home from school, we decided as a family that she'd been away for a long time and it would be hard for her to successfully make up her school work. The university generously gave her a retroactive withdraw back to day-one of school, wiped her academic record clean, refunded her money and held her scholarship until she was ready to return to school.

The plan was to get dad back on the mend and headed for transplant, spend some important family time together, and Hannah would start school again in January.

As I've said before, no pity party for me, no sitting around feeling sorry for myself. I had a life to live and things to do. We got lucky and had some amazingly beautiful fall weather for Washington. We took advantage of the many walking paths, parks, and beaches, heading out each day for sunshine, fresh air, and family time.

Round three of Romi – October 28, 2013

I was due to go into round three of Romi on October 28th. Unfortunately, my blood counts were off and I couldn't have the Romi. That was also the day that Dr. Shustov told me that I was end stage lymphoma, that I wasn't going to make it. Breathe in, breathe out, shed a tear and make memories.



I was given a gift. I knew I was going to die. Many people die at the drop of a hat. No closure, no opportunity to express their wishes, choose how to live their final days. I had a chance to make the most of my last days on Earth. My family and I are forever grateful that Dr. Shustov had the courage and compassion to give me the news as soon as it was apparent that I'd lost my battle with lymphoma.



Always a fighter, I decided to try one more infusion, Cladribine. As Dr. Shustov told me, it wasn't going to cure my cancer, but perhaps it would give me a few more days or weeks with my family to make memories.

My wife and I now had to go home and share with our daughter, now 20 years old, the news... Dad won his cancer battle for ten months, now it was time to focus on making our last memories.

Living life to the fullest; making memories – fishing is the theme

I think a lot of people, when faced with the knowledge that they will pass away and their days are numbered, probably don't respond the way that I did. For me, I still had the attitude that I had a life to live and memories to make with my family and friends. The first thing I said to my wife after we heard the news was, "Let's book a fishing trip on the river." Within moments,



my wife was on her Blackberry searching for fishing charters and booking trips with Derek and Screamin' Reels.



The next day I spent time showing my daughter all of my fishing tackle boxes, what lures to use when fishing in the Puget Sound and on the rivers, how to polish the lures, tie the lines, and sharing my secrets on how to catch fish.

I actually went on two fishing trips while I was still mobile. The first was on the Snohomish River with my wife, our daughter, my dad, and my brother. We caught ten salmon that day. The second trip was on the Skykomish



River with my wife and daughter, brother, and my friend

Doug. We hauled in five fish that day. As you can see in the pictures, we were laughing and making great memories. Most importantly we caught a ton of fish, well not a ton but man were my arms sore at the end of the day.



Taking care of business and my kids

My wife and I had wills and living wills put in place not long after the birth of our daughter. But to ensure there were no problems after my passing, it was important to me that her financial well-being was in order. We went to see an attorney and had a community property agreement put in place. This would guarantee 100% without a doubt that all of my assets would go to my wife and she would avoid probate. This gave me peace of mind. In addition, we also had the vehicle and boat titles put into only my wife's name. Yes, it's something she could have dealt with later, but it was important to me that these things be taken care of now.



We also went to the jewelry store where I picked out special gifts for my exchange student daughters, as well as my daughter Hannah. I spoke with each of my exchange daughters over Skype, told them the "bad" news and how proud of them I was, and presented them each with a gift. Of course, they cried. We shared many special memories and I had the opportunity to tell each of them how much I loved them. The gift from the jewelry store for my daughter, she wouldn't get until later. I had something special planned.

One evening, when I had trouble sleeping, I did some on-line shopping at Nordstrom and bought clothes for Hannah for Christmas. I knew whether I was alive or not, that Christmas was going to be tough and I wanted Hannah to know that I loved her deeply and was thinking of her. Free People was her favorite brand of clothes, so Free People it was. Not cheap stuff, but I spoil her rotten and she's worth it!

Lunch with co-workers

I am thankful for my co-workers. They supported me in various ways throughout my cancer journey as I shared with you earlier throughout my story. Once again, they were gathering up donations to fund my second fishing trip. My co-worker Dan, wanted to donate to me his 25th company anniversary celebration proceeds which was normally a nice dinner paid for by the company.

I suggested that lunch with my boss and his wife, Dan and his wife, and my wife and me would be great. This would be another opportunity to spend time with co-workers and make more memories. Instead, my boss Don surprised me and arranged for an all-team Chinese food lunch. He also included my wife's co-workers as well as a friend from contracts, Steve, and a friend from the FAA, Doug. It was nice to see so many people care and to know that my wife would have a support network after my passing. My only regret, we failed to get a group photo so I don't have an opportunity to share the faces of the people, my co-workers, who supported me throughout my journey.

It was during this lunch that my co-worker Ray asked my wife if he could take me on a flight in his Piper Warrior II. Without hesitation we said yes. More to come on that later.

One last crabbing trip at Padilla Bay – November 3, 2013

My boss, the first person to come see me after my diagnosis, once again stepped up and delivered. He planned a crabbing trip at Padilla Bay on his boat. His wife and son went along, as well as my fishing buddy

Danyon, who played deck hand and bar tender. And of course my wife and daughter went along too.



A surprise visit from an FAA co-worker Chris, prior to leaving the dock made the trip extra special. On top of it a former boss of mine named Craig met us out at my favorite crabbing spot on his boat, climbed aboard and we visited for a while. Life is good and people are so kind!

We had an interesting adventure out on the water that day to say the least, which included a rope getting caught in the prop of the boat. So, like an Ironman, Danyon went into the water to untangle the mess! The crab pots were saved and we were back on track for more crabbing.

We brought home crab that day, no surprise! I showed my boss my favorite crabbing spot, now the cat was out of the bag. A 30-year family favorite crabbing spot had been revealed.



Celebrating my 51st Birthday – November 8, 2013

I mentioned earlier that my in-laws are the BEST. My mother-in-law made my favorite dinner, prime rib along with all of the trimmings, and Hannah helped grandma with the cooking. They picked out a birthday cake from Coldstone Creamery, along with a funny party hat. I ate well that night, I wasn't holding back on my favorite foods!



A couple of days later we went to the movies to see Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger in "Escape Plan." My wife was always good about putting up with my violent movies and every once in a while I would indulge her with a sappy romantic movie. The show was actually quite cheesy, but it was a Stallone/Schwarzenegger flick, so I guess I shouldn't have expected too much... "I'll be back."



A horse drawn carriage ride, fulfilling my wife's bucket list – November 10, 2013



Life isn't all about me. "Covenant, covenant, what's a covenant?" Reverend Russel Rehm spoke these words to my wife and me during our marriage ceremony at Gaches Mansion in La Conner on December 28, 1986. As he explained, it's about doing something because you want to, because it's the right thing to do, without expecting anything in return. This is how my wife and I lived our 26+ years of marriage. Her strength and courage as we lived through my cancer journey was beyond incredible. I could try to put it into words, but there is no way that I could do it justice. It will suffice to say that the photos

you're seeing and the story that I'm sharing is as much or more because of her than me.

One of my last gifts to her was a horse drawn carriage ride. It was one of those things that we always talked about doing, but never took the time or spent the money to do. My workout friend at the gym, Jerry, owns "Once Upon a Lifetime" and offered us the opportunity to make more memories. So off we went a-trotting on a horse drawn carriage ride... My wife and daughter, my brother and me. It was a beautiful fall day.

Flying over my favorite fishing holes in a Piper Warrior II – November 11, 2013

I mentioned earlier that my co-worker Ray offered my wife and me a flight in his Piper Warrior II, and today was flying day. My wife sent Ray the GPS coordinates for all of my favorite fishing and crabbing spots on the Puget Sound and local rivers. It was beautiful and sunny when we took off from the Arlington Airport. The views were absolutely amazing. We flew over the Stillaguamish





and Skagit Rivers and continued north towards the San Juan Islands, catching a quick glimpse of Padilla Bay before we headed north and east towards Cypress Island, Hein Bank and Middle Bank, and points beyond. We were cleared for flight through the Whidbey NAS airspace and continued south towards Mukilteo, viewing Baby Island (just east of Whidbey Island) as well as Possession Bar and Shipwreck, the place where one day my ashes will be spread. A quick fly-by over the Delivery Center at Paine Field for a wave and shout out to my co-workers finished up my day with Ray on his Piper Warrior II. My wife captured a great picture of me in the co-pilot's seat... I am her Top Gun, watch out Tom Cruise!

The turtle is watching you – November 14, 2013

Hannah decided to get a tattoo to remember me by, like she'd ever forget me? I think it was just an excuse to be a little rebellious and get a tattoo, ha! She pondered for many days what the tattoo would be, heavily leaning towards a fish, I wonder why? Then one day it hit her, a turtle. You see, we had this special "The turtle is watching you" thing going between us. It all started with a visit to the pediatrician, they placed us in the "turtle room". There was turtle wallpaper, turtle pictures, and stuffed turtles all over the place. I joked with her that the turtle was watching her. Over the course of many years there were always turtles popping onto the scene, whether it was on vacation, at a restaurant, or the mall shopping for a gift... The turtle was always watching Hannah. So off to the tattoo shop we went, to talk with Sasha (the tattoo artist) about Hannah's imminent turtle, the design, and the size of the tattoo. She opted for the tattoo to be placed on her forearm, quite large, and of course watching her.



A cruise in my 1969 Mustang Grande and one last look at Expensive Therapy – November 16, 2014

Eighteen years ago I purchased and restored, from the ground up, a 1969 Mustang Grande. The intent, gift it to my daughter someday and in the meantime enjoy the heck out of it. It certainly wasn't my plan in life to give her the car at the age of 20, but sometimes life throws you an unexpected curveball... Or maybe I should say a sucker punch to the gut.



I woke up the morning of November 16th with an energy surge. I desperately needed to get my facial hair cleaned up. Yes, without the chemo I was starting to grow a shaggy beard.



It was time to take the Mustang for a spin with Hannah at the wheel. I handed the keys over and she nervously took to the highway, heading first to Bayside Marine on the Everett waterfront for what would be my last photo opportunity with Expensive Therapy. Then we drove east out to the Snohomish Bakery to pick up some yummy pastries, and then headed even further east towards Sultan to get a look at the Skykomish River to see if the salmon were still running. Back home we went, tucked the Mustang safely back into the garage, and Hannah breathed a sigh of relief, she didn't wreck dad's car!

The last thing on my bucket list; Hannah and my handgun – November 21, 2013

I never really had a bucket list in life, it really wasn't necessary. But there was one last thing that was important to me to have happen prior to my passing. This probably seems quite strange, but I wanted to see Hannah shoot my Ruger handgun. Off to Norpoint Gun Range for some target practice. My dad joined us that day.

At this point in time it was too difficult for me to show Hannah how to load the gun and shoot it, so my wife as usual took care of business and approached a man at the range. Without hesitation, he said he would help. It was through our speaking with him that we learned he was a retired Marine with a great big heart.

As you can see in the photo, Hannah did me proud. She's a fast learner and got several "kills". So I guess you could say that my bucket list is now complete.



Family and friends continue to visit



Two days later, Don and his wife (Jo) and Craig paid me a visit. We shared more fishing stories, including the ling cod that I caught and shared on the cover page of this story. Later that afternoon the hospital bed was delivered; it was time for me to transition from the comforts of my pillow top mattress to a hospital bed.

Doug and Tami, Danyon and Hiroko, Claudia and Maggie, Steve, and Martin were just a few of the people that visited over the course of the next several days. They delivered messages of peace and prayer, and comfort too.

Thanksgiving – November 28, 2013

My fishing friend Mike, the same person that made the halibut trips to La Push with me, prepared our Thanksgiving turkey... The first time we ever had a deep fried turkey. Hannah and my mother-in-law made Thanksgiving dinner at my in-law's home and brought it to our home so we could all enjoy a big feast. Thanksgiving dinner was shared with my brother and sister-in-law Patti, father-in-law and mother-in-law, daughter, and wife. Hannah and I shared a plate filled with my favorite foods, including candied yams and Polish beans.

It had been a long day and I was tired, it was time for everyone to go home and Hannah wanted to take a nap. It was time for me to rest too.

One year later – looking back and forward – Tina's story

Ben passed away peacefully on Thanksgiving evening, November 28, 2013 after a joyful time and a special meal shared with family. He died exactly as he wished, with his dignity, pain-free and with me by his side. Fortunately, Hannah woke up from her nap and was there too... Just in time for her daddy to say, "Hannah help your mom." We both truly feel that Ben picked his time to die, his life was complete. He gave us his best and last gift, we didn't have to see him suffer. His body and soul said, "It's time" and he soared off to a better place to fish, and fish, and fish.

I honestly have to say that if I had my husband another day, there is nothing more that I would do with him and there is nothing more that I would say to him. We had what I guess you'd call a perfect marriage, one of almost 27 years. Sure, he had his faults and I certainly have mine, but in the end we truly believed in the "for better and for worse, for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part" stuff.

My most vivid memories of Ben are his words to me, "don't cry, be strong" and "take care of today and tomorrow will come", along with his laughing, joking and strength in the face of uncertainty. I know, without a doubt, that I gave Ben the strength and courage to fight his cancer, and he gave me the strength and courage to fight cancer with him. I guess we were the "yin and yang" that made the circle complete.

Our Mongolian daughter, Nomuun, had planned to travel to her American home for Christmas and an opportunity to see her dad one more time before he passed. Unable to fulfill that wish, there was still a way for her to celebrate and remember her dad. I changed her airplane ticket and she flew here early. She wrote a beautiful story that she shared at her dad's Celebration of Life at the Everett Yacht Club, and also shared messages from her sister in Brazil, Bia, and her sister in Japan, Yuka. Even though Brazil and Japan are so far away, with technology they were able to watch the Celebration of Life and hear their messages delivered by Nomuun. And, I was incredibly touched when Nomuun returned to college to complete her master's degree and dedicated her thesis in memory of her American dad.

Hannah decided to stay home and return to MSU in the fall of 2014. Since I was going back to work after the new year, Hannah went to school at a local community college where she picked up credits that would transfer over to MSU.





Spring has sprung, it's time to go fishing... Exactly what Ben would be doing if he were still with us. Doug, Tami, Danyon and I headed out in Expensive Therapy for some ling cod fishing. We caught a few flounder and used live bait to try and catch ling cod. We shared memories of Ben and laughed a whole lot. Ben would be proud of us, no doubt!

Over the 4th of July, Bill and Patti came for a visit. We had a sunny and prosperous day on

Expensive Therapy catching Dungeness crab, great BIG Dungeness crab! And later in the month, Bia came for a visit too! We were moving on, living life, and enjoying each other's company.



Prior to Ben's passing he ordered all new interior upholstery and Dakota Digital Gauges for the Mustang, he wanted the car to be perfect for Hannah. My father-in-law, Fred, spent several days with Hannah working on the car, fulfilling Ben's wishes and making great memories with his granddaughter.

Remember Karen? She's the childhood friend of Hannah's who hosted the "Spit Party", adding more potential stem cell and bone marrow donors to the Be the Match Registry. Karen was a perfect match and donated stem cells to a leukemia patient a few months ago. I am so incredibly proud of her selfless act, she saved a life!

And remember when Ben shared that he made a trip to the jewelry store and picked out special gifts for his daughters? Well, his gift for Hannah was a turtle necklace made of black diamonds. I had to keep the secret for eight months! Yes, she cried when she open her gift from her dad and read the card that he wrote in for her.

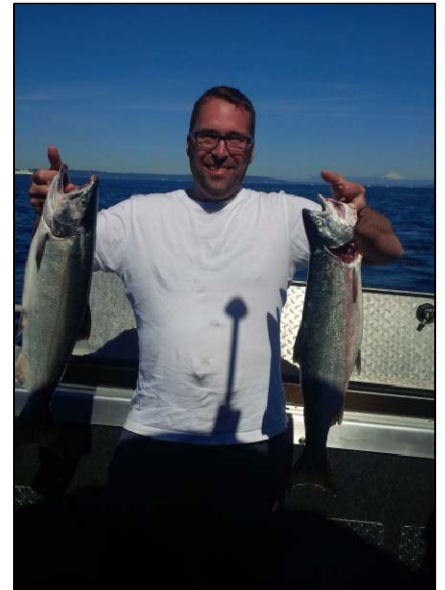


Not long after Hannah's 21st birthday it was time for her to return to MSU and make her daddy proud. It wasn't easy for her to walk away from the comfort and security of our home; she most definitely got her bravery from her dad, along with her focus and determination, and her quirky sense of humor. They truly were best friends and two peas in a pod.



Before we took the ten-hour road trip to Bozeman, MSU or Bust, Hannah and I spent time with Grandpa Fred. We're all hurting in our own way, but for Fred he has now lost three out of four of his children. It's hard to make sense of this, so instead we focus on the positive... Because there really is a lot to be thankful for.

I took a much needed leave of absence from work in August and September. I am very thankful for my job at Boeing and my boss, who supported my leave not because he had to, but because he truly understood my need to get rest and focus on taking care of myself. I didn't realize just how exhausted I was, and how much I needed some "me" time to rejuvenate. I spent the first month pretty much just sleeping, and the second month I tackled projects around the house. Ben kicked me in the butt and I finally got back to the gym. You see, he lost 50 pounds during his cancer journey and I gained 40 pounds! It's all that high protein, high fat, high calorie food and no exercise that really does a person in. I promised Ben that I would "take care of me". So, mid-September I walked back through the doors of PA Fitness. It was difficult opening the door and walking in, as it was a second home for Ben and we spent many hours working out together there. But it was the best thing that I have ever done. The people there really care and I think it brought them comfort to have a little bit of Ben back at the gym by me being there.



In September I hosted two soldiers in the Salmon for Soldiers fishing derby. Expensive Therapy and my soldiers caught four fish that day. I'm kind of thinking that Ben had something to do with that, as there weren't many fish landed... Lines were tight but the fish weren't biting... Except on Expensive Therapy!



Everything happens for a reason. I took my leave of absence at the perfect time, leaving me rejuvenated and ready to tackle the world. I learned through a Facebook post that the T-cell Leukemia Lymphoma Foundation was having their annual gala dinner and silent auction. I contacted the foundation, purchased tickets for my parents (Jim and Marsha), my friend (Claudia) and me to attend, and I offered to help. I felt like I had a renewed purpose in life. I knew that someday, after enough time had passed that I would get involved

with the foundation... The time had come.

While coordinating silent auction donation items with Alicia and Toni-Ann from the foundation, they put in a special request to me. They asked if I would be willing to introduce Dr. Shustov at the event. I said with 100% confidence, "yes". A few days later I shared my introduction and they decided that instead of me introducing Dr. Shustov, Dr. Shustov would be introducing me. They asked if I was okay and comfortable with that, and I said, "Yes, I am putty in your hands. Just ask and you shall receive." So I modified my introduction, turned it into a speech of sorts, one that I would like to share with you as a close to this story. I feel that you will get a deeper sense of Ben's true spirit, how important Dr. Shustov was to Ben, and how grateful we are for his continued work and passion to find a cure for T-cell lymphoma.



Good evening. I was approached by the foundation a few weeks ago, and they asked me if I would share my story with you tonight. Without hesitation I said "yes". You see, Dr. Shustov and I have a special connection. I met Dr. Shustov, not as a cancer survivor, but as the wife of a cancer fighter. My husband, Ben, was diagnosed with Stage IVB T-cell lymphoma on December 20, 2012, just eight days before our 26th wedding anniversary.

We spent eleven months fighting cancer with Dr. Shustov on our team pulling out all of the stops trying to find the missing piece to the puzzle to cure Ben's cancer. CHOP, Alisertib, ICE, Romidepsin and Cladribine. Dr. Shustov never gave up, and Ben never gave up. Treatment after treatment after treatment... Giving Ben more days to live life to the fullest and giving researchers and Dr. Shustov more time to find a cure for lymphoma. We were confident that Ben would beat lymphoma to the finish line, that remission and a stem cell transplant were in his future.

It is incredibly hard to put into words how special Dr. Shustov was to my husband. He gave him strength and courage beyond words. Dr. Shustov never settled for less than perfection, he never gave up, he believed in Ben and Ben believed in him. He made a quite scary situation more bearable, he filled us both with hope, and he fed my husband's will to fight. He was willing to throw all of his available resources into Ben, as long as Ben wanted to continue fighting. His bedside manner was incredible... His emotional investment in his patients is commendable. Spend a few moments with Dr. Shustov, and you too will experience what my husband and I did. He's infectious... In a good way.

Unfortunately, on October 28th of last year, just 10 months after Ben's diagnosis, Dr. Shustov was faced with the unpleasant task of telling my husband that he was end stage lymphoma at the age of 50. His days were numbered, one week, one month, maybe two months if we were lucky. Thirty-one days later, on Thanksgiving evening, my husband passed away peacefully at home with our daughter and me by his side.

Tonight is about awareness, awareness of T-cell leukemia and lymphoma, and the people behind the faces with these horrible diseases. I wish more than anything that my husband was standing here with me tonight sharing his cancer journey, that he could stand before you and say, "I am a T-cell lymphoma survivor." Instead, he lost his cancer battle and I stand here alone with a deep passion to share our story, to make him proud, and to ask for your help.

It's amazing to think about how far medicine has advanced and how treatable some cancers are today. If we could turn back the clock ten years, if we had made a commitment to invest in T-cell cancer research, then perhaps Ben would be with us tonight saying "Thank you, thank you for investing in me, I am a T-cell lymphoma survivor." People like my husband deserve the opportunity to face their cancer head-on, to have unlimited resources available to their doctors and to hear the "R" word, "Remission" along with the "S", "C" and "T" words, "Stem Cell Transplant"... Four words that my husband and I never got to hear.

As we approach Thanksgiving next week, and the one year anniversary of the passing of my husband, I have much to be thankful for. I am thankful for my family and friends, some of which are here tonight. I am thankful for Dr. Shustov, thankful for the foundation, and thankful to be standing before you tonight sharing my story. And, last but certainly not least, I am thankful to you for taking the time to be here tonight.

We have an opportunity to find a cure for everyone diagnosed with T-cell leukemia or lymphoma. It takes a team to solve a complex cancer puzzle. Please join me on Team Shustov, let's finish the puzzle and find a cure.

Thank you.