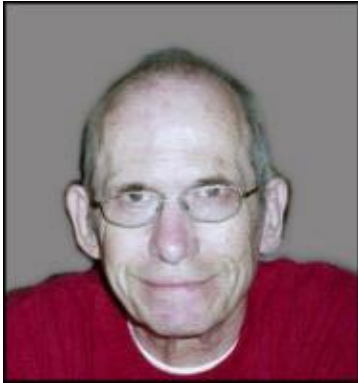


Our Club

The Topic of Cancer



Life is really full of irony. On August 27th 2001, I quit smoking forever and was pretty proud of myself, I mean, really proud of myself. Two years later to the day, I was diagnosed with lung cancer, a small-cell cancer which metastasized to the left adrenal gland. As if the challenge of abstaining from the use of nicotine after 40 some odd years of addiction wasn't enough. And at hearing the diagnosis, I was almost relieved; it meant no more laryngoscope down my throat, no more bronchoscopies, no more echocardiogram (my EKG was perfect and that didn't satisfy my cardiologist), no more CT Scans (at least for the time being); instead, the dreaded Chemo-therapy which is no bed of roses.

Married to a nurse as I am, and teaching fencing to children of doctors, it didn't take me long to learn quite a bit about my ailment; it's small-cell cancer, the kind that grows like the weeds on our lawn but cannot stand the effects of chemo-therapy; it differs from "non-small-cell" cancer in that this cancer grows slowly but will not budge, at least not without some drastic measures. So, lucky me; for those with morbid interest, chemo-therapy has you on VERY BIG IV bags that drip very slowly and are replaced immediately by another BIG IV bag that takes even longer. At least you're sitting while this is going on, you can go to the toilet with your tall skinny friend the IV pole (and you need to with those gallons of fluid entering your system), you can read, fall asleep, talk with the other patients about anything but cancer (unless they ask you, "What are you in for?" to which you're tempted to answer, "Murder 1, I stabbed my attorney"), you can get visitors (thanks, Neil), you can even get a birthday party (thanks, everyone), listen to your music, in one word, LAZE while the cure drips into your veins.

You can even go to San Marcos and coach Chris to a 5th place finish in a MxE A tournament, to TFA in Austin for a beginners' competition where 4 Salle Pouj novices took a total of 5 medals for 4 events: 3 Gold, 1 Silver, 1 Bronze (congratulations, you know who you are and now the people at TFA do too). And after 2 three-day sessions of Chemo, you're ready to face the third one, but first, on to San Marcos for the Ken Hogan Memorial -- to-morrow. Ken used to teach fencing at the Marine Academy in Harlingen and died of cancer. In those days, the survival rate from the Disease was 35%; now, I'm told, it's closer to 70%. Again, lucky me.

No matter what happens, though, whether I beat the odds or not, I am super-lucky for all the friends I have who are praying for me, for all the support I get from family, extended family, co-patients, for all the good care I received from my doctors, and for all the money I'm saving on hair-cuts and shaving cream. And, for the last two years, on cigarettes.

Having cancer is not a good thing but for someone with my job, it's ideal; I get treated the way I'm supposed to and I still have time to make a living doing what I've always wanted to do: teach fencing in my own salle.

Again, lucky me.