

Getting Through it with the Help of G and g

In July 2007, I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma. It is a rare form of cancer (only 8,000 new cases a year in the U.S.) in the lymph nodes which is neither hereditary nor is it caused by any known factor, but fortunately is very curable. It is in the same family of cancers as leukemia.

I first discovered that I had the illness while my wife Cindy, our two daughters, and I were on a cruise in July 2007 off the coast of Spain (celebrating our younger daughter's graduation from Dartmouth and our last tuition payments!).

One morning, after a shower, I saw a bump on my neck which I thought might be an insect bite. I went to see the cruise ship doctor. Much to my surprise, the doctor told me to look into the bump when we got home from the cruise since he thought it might be an enlarged node, and possibly cancerous. The skill of that doctor resulted in the diagnosis of the disease at an early stage. Needless to say, it was quite a shock to ultimately learn that I had Hodgkin's, especially since I was feeling generally fine, and had no real symptoms.

In January 2008 I completed six months of chemotherapy, and am having limited radiation. Since I was fortunate to have an illness which has an over 90+% cure rate which has responded very well to the treatment, my doctors are optimistic.

I could not have made the journey which began in July without the support of my wife and family, who have been there for me throughout. In addition, I have a very special place in my heart for friends who have supported me – in ways I may never quite know or understand – most especially G and g.

When I first learned that I had Hodgkin's I spoke with a childhood friend who was a survivor of a very similar form of cancer. He told me this story:

“A man falls in a well and screams for help. A doctor walks by and throws a prescription down the well. The man yells, ‘Thanks for the prescription, but what am I going to do with it?’ A minister then walks by and throws a prayer down the well. The man in the well yells, ‘Thanks for the prayer, but it won't get me out of the well.’ Then, an old friend walks by and sees his friend in the well. The old friend jumps into the well. The man stuck in the well says to his old friend, ‘Why did you do that? Now we're both stuck in the well.’ His old friend responds, ‘Yes, but I have been in the well and know the way out.’”

The Wolfs have certainly been in the well, and with Greg's divine guidance, have been working tirelessly to get people out of the well, including me.

I have known the Wolfs for 15 years. I work closely with George at the Herrick, Feinstein law firm, where I have been a partner for almost 25 years. Like so many other partners in our law firm, I consider George a friend and a mentor. We live near each other – I live in Princeton, NJ and the Wolfs live just over the Delaware River in Pennsylvania. And, I have had the great pleasure of having been responsible for overseeing the work of a number of the Wolf children who have worked in our Princeton branch office (and have been among our best employees).

I also was privileged to have spent time with Greg after he so courageously went through his initial treatments, and I spoke with him about his career interest and

aspirations. He never complained. He only wanted to know how he could help the next guy. For those who knew Greg, he was one special person.

I also have supported the Greg Wolf Fund since its formation, and have heard stories about how George, his family and the Foundation, have helped cancer patients. Little did I know that I would learn so much first hand.

I credit a conversation I had with George when I first learned I had cancer, for putting me at ease. He said that everyone is a “snowflake” and I should not try to compare myself to anyone else. Cancer patients have a tendency to run immediately to the internet and look at frightening statistics and read difficult stories. The “snowflake” image has sustained me to this day.

In July 2007, when I was first diagnosed, I began a series of email exchanges with George, which he always signed “G and g”. At first George helped me identify doctors and he did not think twice about contacting Greg’s doctors in the US and the UK.

My first email from George was:

“Ron, I will do ANYTHING and EVERYTHING in my power to be a help to you throughout your battle, and it will be a fight, but you (we) will win. One more thing, Ron, if you get me...you get Greg. He will be with us...the entire way. As for Dr. Stadtmauer, I got a call from his answering service (he forwarded his cell), that he’ll call me tomorrow morning. As for Prof. Lister, I’ll speak to him tomorrow as well. The list below will help the discussions. I’ll report back to you tomorrow my friend. Take care of Cindy and the girls, they’re hurting right now, worrying about their guy. That’s your job. Let God, Greg and the doctors do the rest. Remember, anytime you want to talk or any favor you need...I’m here.”

Shortly thereafter, I received the following message from G and g:

“Greg has you in the palm of his hand. He won’t let you go, my friend. He really liked you and he needs the work! He’ll always be with you.”

George introduced me to other friends in his incredible network, including, Frank McClane, a survivor of the very same rare form of cancer I was fighting. George urged me to call Frank. George sent me this email:

“Spoke to Frank tonight on the train. He is expecting (and looking forward) to your call. As far as what you have ahead of you, it’s nothing you can’t handle. Frank will tell you that. Remember what Greg always told me, ‘God picked me, Pop, cuz he knew I could handle it.’

- G and g...we’re with you

Because each email was so special, I saved all of them – they number more than 35. The mail I treasure the most is the following. I received it on Halloween night, October 31. I was having chemo twice a month, and I had gone through chemo that day. I was having an especially difficult time that evening, and was sweating in my sleep. In the middle of the night I looked at my Blackberry and saw this email from George. I had not told George I was having chemo that day, and I certainly did not tell him about my

problems that night. But, he always seemed to know when I was having chemo. Here is the email:

“Hey, I always know when you’re getting your ‘chemo cocktails’, cuz I have more Greg moments on those days. While we all worry (care) about you, Greg’s got you in his heavenly arms...and he will not let go of you, pal. You’re doing great. Don’t sweat the small stuff, Ron. The pneumatic fevers will happen, go with it. Make sure the girls see you calm...or you’ll have to worry about the three of them! As Greg would always tell me, ‘I can keep my cool if you do, Pop’...little did I know it was a two-way street. I worried when he did. Got it? Let GREGGY sweat the small stuff. You worry about the girls”

- G and g :)

My body cooled down shortly after I read the email, at 3 a.m. There is no doubt that Greg has been at my side, looking out for me.

My story can be repeated by scores of others.

Two essential goals of the Greg Wolf Foundation – supporting research and aiding those who need financial assistance – are very close to the hearts of my family and me. We know how critical it is to support research, both in the United States and overseas. Because of organized medical systems, studies in Europe generate more reliable results than in the United States. And, leukemia and lymphoma research, which the Foundation supports, will help fight not only those cancers but so many other forms of cancer since that research is at the “cutting edge.”

And, having been a cancer patient in an Institute which services patients from all socio-economic backgrounds, I am well aware of the need for financial support for cancer patients who are struggling financially. We heard first hand about patients who had to forego treatments because they could not pay for them, and how the illness had devastating financial impacts on them and their families.

Indeed, when I was briefly hospitalized for a fever resulting from my chemo, a hospital worker asked me if I could leave at the hospital some of the pre-packaged needle injections which I was not going to need – so they could be used by patients who could not afford them.

My story continues, as does the work of the Greg Wolf Foundation. I hope that you will join us in this battle. You could not be working with a better family, team or cause.