

I have survived to my 1st Birthday...

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CUSTOM PARTS FABRICATION

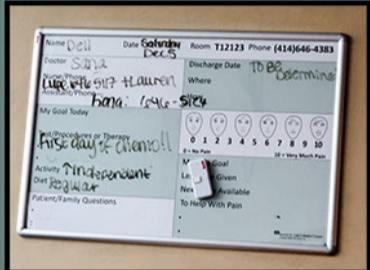


Thanks to my young grandson, Lucas, wanting to play trucks on the floor gave me the motivation to get my bum knee fixed. “This is going to be easy”, or so I thought. Simple arthroscopic surgery on December 7, 2020, and I would be good as new in no time. November 25, 2020, I was off to the doctor for blood work the orthopedic doc was requiring before surgery. November 27th was the Friday after Thanksgiving. I was heading back to the shack for my second weekend of deer season. My primary care Doc called me when I was less than 10 miles from my little piece of heaven to tell me my blood work was abnormal. I needed to see another doctor. I set that appointment for Monday, November 30th. When I arrived for the appointment, I was sure there was a mistake. I was in the Cancer Care department. I was scheduled for a bone marrow biopsy Wednesday, December 2nd. Friday, December 4th at 2:00PM I got a call from St. Luke’s hospital that they had my room ready, could I be there at 4:00? I said “no, but I could probably be there at 5:00.” I left the office in a hurry to go home and pack. I got checked in, but my wife had to “kick me at the curb”, Covid Protocols were not allowing anybody but patients in the hospital. A very lonely reality was starting to set in. Due to my late arrival, I was not going to see a doctor that evening. Nurses are not allowed to discuss diagnosis or treatment plans, but I was assured the doctor would be in to see me Saturday morning.



I spent a lonely Friday night wondering what was going on, “Am I going to survive this or was this my death sentence?” It was me and what was to be my new best friend, an IV pole, with various bags of fluid.

Finally, 11:00AM Saturday morning I found out I had Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. Chemo starts now. I would spend a week per month inpatient for Chemo infusions along with an extensive list of oral medications. The treatment plan was to do a Stem Cell transplant after my immune system and current cells were eliminated to accept the donor cells.



April 13, 2021, was Transplant Day. Transplant consisted of two IV bags of new stem cells from a donor in Europe. That was the easy part. The side effects of all the anti-rejection drugs hit with a vengeance, about five days later. I just really wanted out of the hospital. My extended stay was getting really old. Finally, in early May, I was headed home. Follow up clinic visits were 7 days a week, then 5, and 3 and finally to once a week. That is where I still am. I am still searching for the sixty pounds I lost but would be happy for half of that. My goal is to regain strength by the end of summer and maybe play a round or two of golf.



This journey would not have been possible without a great team behind me. The RK Team really stepped up and got things done without much input from me. The guys in the shop have kept things humming right along and instituted some needed streamlining to make things better. Melissa found some new independence, without me always over her shoulder.



My son Andy had to learn how to run a business on a much-accelerated timeline compared to our original plan. He has learned it’s just not 40 hours 5 days a week. There is no way RK would be as strong as we are without him steering the ship.



The real hero in this is my wife, Sandy. I would not be writing this without her overseeing so many aspects of the last 16 months. She has experienced all the highs and gotten me through all the lows, of which there were many.



We celebrated our 39-year anniversary earlier this year. I think she looks just as good in her wedding dress as the day we got married.

So, on my first birthday, I want to say thanks by sharing this story with everyone. I will offer a couple of words of advice for everyone:



*“Treasure every moment you can.
Spend it with friends and family
as you never know what tomorrow will bring.
Here’s to hoping every tomorrow is
better than today.”*

Dell Gutknecht, General Manager

