

**MY DOCTOR GAVE
ME SIX WEEKS ... I
DID NOT TAKE IT!**

By

*Malcolm J Itkin
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MY DOCTOR GAVE ME SIX WEEKS ... I DID NOT TAKE IT!

Hello, my name is Malcolm Itkin and I have metastatic sarcoma and there is currently no cure. So what!

This is a story about attitude and faith. More important, is trust in your gut because no one knows you better than you know yourself. I really believe that a strong positive mental attitude and faith make a significant difference in what happens to you in your life.

Some people view the “glass as being half **empty** while others always see it as half **full.**” People live longer with the “half full” attitude. Also stress and how you deal with it can influence your quality of life.

This is a story about how attitude and faith improved a man’s quality of life.

Blessings

Where to start is a very difficult place to find because my first **BLESSING** that I am aware of was on June 6, 1946, the day that I was born. However, this story is not about my life but about challenges that I have encountered and the **BLESSINGS** that I have noticed along the way. I am nothing special and no better or worse than you. I hope that some of what I am writing about will be relatable to you and help you discover some of your **BLESSINGS**. For me, I guess it all started back in November of 2006.

I had noticed that I was having trouble bending over to tie my shoes. It was very difficult for me to pull my right foot up on my left knee. Of course, at the time I just thought that I was getting old and out of shape. Later, I would learn something different.

I am not sure of the exact day but my first **BLESSING** came the day that I went to Bally's to hire a trainer and start to work out. Now, you need to know that my whole life fitness came very easy to me. I never worked out per se because I was pretty active and because of my activity level my body stayed in fairly decent condition. I would not say that was the case after I turned fifty, however. Let's stay on track; I decided that I would go to Bally's and so I did. I drove over to a center on Newport Avenue and went in and told the receptionist what I was looking for. She called someone to come to the front desk and she and I went in to a room where she started to explain my options. Well, remember, I really did not want to be there and I was having a very difficult time communicating with this individual. Because I did not really want to work out, and because I was becoming frustrated with the young lady trying to help me, I told her to forget it and walked out of her office. I headed for the door to leave and forget about the whole concept. However, in order to get to the main exit, I had to pass the Club Manager's Office. Saul saw me and asked if there was anything that he could do. I told him that I had come here to figure out a way to get back into shape; he suggested that I step into his office for a minute. We talked and he basically said to me "...if I could make it attractive enough for you would you reconsider taking out a membership..." Well, Saul did exactly that he gave me a great price, close to ten free sessions with a trainer, and a trainer who I have grown to love and believe actually that Jason enhanced the quality of my life.

I call this **BLESSING NUMBER ONE** because I did not want to be there, for some reason I went and as soon as I met the littlest resistance, I was on my way out the door. But it was not meant to happen - I was sent to Bally's that day and a force more powerful than I was making sure that I got what I needed. This was truly **BLESSING NUMBER ONE**. Later I would learn how important that day was.

BLESSING NUMBER TWO: In July of 2007, my daughter Jennifer came home. What you need to know is that when she turned 15 or 16, she became impossible to live with. Suzy (my wife) and I had decided that this was the LORD's way of helping her prepare to leave the nest so to speak. She could not wait to go off to college and we were eager for her to get out of the house as well. I must hasten to add, that with all the trouble and

aggravation that she presented, I never wanted to trade Jenny for any other child. She was a good person, a great student, just going through the typical teenage thing. Well, Jenny had graduated from Boston College in 2005 and then went off to Ecuador for a year. In July of 2007, she came home from Ecuador to live with us and try to find a job. I know that she had no desire to stay with us and wanted to get that \$100,000.00 a year job and move as far away from us as she could. However, the job market in 2007 was not very favorable. I realized this and also knew that Jenny was not going to get a high paying job just because she was a college graduate from Boston College. One of the tragedies here was that her education cost so much (over \$160,000 for four years) that she just naturally expected that she would be able to command a high-paying salary for her education and talent. Understanding the situation, I felt that with time she would realize that she would have to do whatever it takes just to get employment.

My point here is that over these months that Jenny was living at home, I got my daughter back. In fact, this time when she actually landed a job and moved out, I was very sorry to see her go. You see this was **BLESSING NUMBER TWO** - I got my daughter back. It is interesting to note that this all happened before anyone was aware that I was sick. What is even more interesting is the fact that once I found out that I had the Sarcoma and then had to be operated on, Jenny was fantastic. She was extremely helpful and supportive. She looked after her brothers, made sure that Eli got to and from school, brought the boys to visit me in Boston and then when I came home from the hospital she helped me with shopping, meals and general needs. Then after one week, she got a job and moved to New Hampshire to work on a job that she was very happy with. It is interesting how she was home without employment to build our relationship and help me through a very difficult challenge? As soon as that was accomplished, bingo she found a job and moved out. Truly this was **BLESSING NUMBER TWO**. It is really amazing to me how the LORD is able to facilitate our needs. We do not always understand what is going on or his time schedule but if you can believe and trust in him, it is amazing what you will learn and see going on! Life is a very special gift and too many of us never take the time to see the trees for the forest! Maybe it is a condition of youth, but we need to learn to grow spiritually and to have faith. It should not have to come through tragedy and/or life challenges but maybe that is his way. I feel **BLESSED** because it is something that has not passed me by.

BLESSING NUMBER THREE: Our neighbors across the street sold their house and left us some furniture. The new neighbors were nice enough not to pressure us into moving the furniture out of their garage. However, after a period of time Todd had asked me if I could remove the furniture from the garage because they were going to need the space. I had promised him that I would have it all out by March 22nd. Well, the deadline came and there was no one around to help me. So I got a hand truck and moved the furniture out of Todd's garage. While I was moving the last piece, a bookcase, it slipped off the hand truck and I reached around to stop it from falling to the ground. I caught it but at a cost. The next morning I notice that I had a pain in my groin area. Monday, when I went to work out with Jason, I noticed that the pain was becoming more severe and I was urinating more frequently than normal. I told Jason of the problem and we decided that I might have pulled or strained something and he was going to only work on my upper

body. Well, by Tuesday, the pain was intensifying and I thought that maybe I had a prostate problem. You see, I was then sixty-one and with age men often develop these situations. So I called a friend, Dr. Richard Caesar, who just happened to be an urologist. He examined me on Tuesday and either noticed something unusual or else realized that it was not a prostate problem but felt that I should have a CAT Scan. That was set up for Thursday morning. Richard told me that he would call me Thursday evening after he reviewed the results. Well, I call this **BLESSING NUMBER THREE** because had I not moved the bookcase, I never would have discovered the SARCOMA. My appointment with Richard was on March 25, 2008. The CAT SCAN was taken on March 27, 2008. So my third blessing came from the fallen bookcase. Because without that accident, I might not have discovered the SARCOMA until it was too late. More on this later; remember on March 22nd I hurt myself and on March 25th I saw a doctor for the pain.

Later, after my surgery and radiation treatments were over, I saw Dr. Caesar and actually asked Richard why he ordered the CAT scan. He told me that he was trying to learn what was causing me the pain. He had not noticed the large abdominal mass but thought that a CAT scan might be helpful in discovering the route of the pain. Had Richard not ordered the scan, I could have gone on for a while with no symptoms from the Sarcoma. Later my surgeon, Dr. Raut told me that the pain that I had that brought me to Richard Caesar had nothing to do with my Sarcoma. If anyone saw the movie, *The Bucket List*, you should know that Jack Nicholson's character, Edward Cole, had a Sarcoma. The difference between Nicholson's character and me is that Dr. Richard Caesar discovered the Sarcoma before I had any symptoms. Nicholson's character went for a check up because he was coughing up blood. His sarcoma had spread and metastasized to his brain and major organs. He had six months to live! **BLESSING NUMBER THREE**, was given to me because I had a totally unrelated injury that led a smart doctor to requesting a CAT scan which then discovered the large abdominal mass, a Solitary Fibrous Tumor or Spindle Cell Neoplasm (Sarcoma).

BLESSING NUMBER FOUR: March 26, 2008 my middle child, Ari, turned 18 and it is a tradition in our household that we go out to dinner to celebrate one's birthday. I was in terrible pain but I did not want to ruin Ari's eighteenth birthday, especially since this was such a milestone in his life. So, I went out with my wife driving, and the children all went in Ari's car. Now you need to be brought up to speed here. Ari and I had a very special relationship. I had been with him for everything from the very beginning. We were very close. I never missed any of his athletic events, plays or anything that was going on in his life. I knew that what happened to my daughter and most teenagers was not going to happen to Ari and me because we really had such a special relationship for so many years. Was I wrong! And when he turned seventeen it hit hard. He hated me and we became very distant. It was as if I had an open wound and he just kept pouring salt on it. Believe me when I tell you that I cried plenty over this situation. I was not prepared for this to happen with Ari and myself. Not Ari, he was different! I really saw no end to it either. When he went for his College Auditions, he asked a friend to take him to New York City instead of me. I had taken this child to everything and now possibly the biggest event of his life, he excludes me!

Well, let me get back on track. It was Wednesday evening and we all went out to dinner. I did not eat very much because I was in such pain from the accident but I do not think anyone was aware of my extreme discomfort. After we had finished eating, Ari gave the keys to his car to his sister and asked her to drive Eli home. Ari jumped in the back of our car and said that he wanted to talk with us. Basically, he said that he was now 18 and he knew that the past few months had not been good. In fact, he knew that I did not attend any of his swim meets because he hated me and chose not to tell me when or where they were. But he was 18 now and he wanted things to be better ... he wanted me to come to all his tennis matches. **BLESSING NUMBER FOUR**, I got my son back! But this event is far more significant than you know; you see he came back before anyone had any knowledge of the fact that I might be dying. That I had a SARCOMA that had spread through out my whole body and my days were possibly numbered; that I might very well not be around for my 62nd birthday or his graduation.

You see my biggest fear was that we would never get back and I would pass on (before I even knew that I had the Cancer) and Ari would spend his whole life regretting our loss. That he would one day receive his first OSCAR and be crying; because he knew that we ended on such distant terms. But **BLESSING NUMBER FOUR** was Ari came back before any knowledge of my illness. He did this all on his own (maybe with a little help from above), a true BLESSING.

Remember that this was Wednesday, March 26, 2008, Ari's eighteenth birthday. The next day I was scheduled for a CAT scan. With **BLESSING NUMBER THREE** I mentioned that Dr. Richard Caesar had scheduled me for a CAT scan on Thursday, March 27, 2008. The scan was around 10AM and Richard told me that he would call me that evening after he had a chance to review the findings. I got home from the scan about 11:30AM and within fifteen minutes I received a telephone call from Dr. Caesar. He was talking in a very quiet and understanding voice and I knew that something was not good. Richard told me that he got the results from the scan and that he felt that I should see a surgeon as soon as possible. He recommended two doctors and based on his tone, I suggested that we go with whoever could see me first. Richard agreed and told me that he would make some telephone calls and see what he could set up for me. **BLESSING NUMBER FIVE** was Doctor Harry Sax, Chief of Surgery at the Miriam Hospital in Providence, Rhode Island. Dr. Sax was able to see me the next morning at 8:30AM. Suzy and I went to meet with Dr. Sax. Please remember that at this point I have no idea of what is going on, only that something serious was found and reported to Dr. Caesar. Well, I do not believe that I have ever met a more compassionate, positive, up beat doctor than Dr. Sax. Suzy and I both fell in love with Dr. Sax immediately. When we left his office, I knew that I had something serious but Dr. Sax was going to figure out what it was and take care of it - **BLESSING NUMBER FIVE**. During our meeting, Dr. Sax review the films of the CAT scan with us. He showed us the mass and explained that it was pushing against several organs so he could not tell if it was attached or not and that he wanted to run a series of tests on me to get more detailed information. Dr. Sax said things like I may have to lose a kidney but that is why I have two and that I would never know I was functioning with only one kidney. He also

mentioned that I might lose part of my liver but there were six lobes and I could function very well with just two. So it was his manner and explanations that never gave me any reason to believe that I was not in the best of care.

It might be instructive to point out that at this point I had not seen the radiologist's report of my CAT scan. Both Dr. Caesar and Dr. Sax had. What I learned later was that the radiologist's report had basically suggested that I had a large abdominal mass that had likely spread (metastasized) to my lungs, liver and kidney. My primary doctor later told me that based on the radiologist's report that he feared that I would not be around for my sixty-second birthday on June 6th. Fortunately, this information was not presented to me until after I had met with Dr. Sax and he had had a chance to do some significant testing.

Dr. Sax told me that he thought that there were several possibilities of what this could be and that he would write them down for me because he was sure that I would not remember what we talked about once I left his office. He gave me a list starting with the worst possible scenario to what he considered the best case scenario and then there were several other options in between. From the way he talked, nothing seemed like a big deal and there was nothing that he could not fix.

From March 31 through April 4, 2008 I went everyday to the Miriam for a different test. The first day was blood work. Dr. Sax, upon getting the results, immediately called me to let me know that my blood work was normal. It did show that my cholesterol was a little high but that did not really concern him. I asked him what it was and he said 220 and I told him that was great because a year ago it was over 240. Tuesday, I went in for a MRI ... Dr. Sax again called me immediately upon receiving the results and told me that the MRI did not show anything different except that there was no metastazation, which was very good news. Remember only he and Dr. Caesar were aware of the radiologist's report. So Dr. Sax was the one feeling the relief; he never let me know about the potential death. When I met with him all I wanted to know was, "...am I going to live or die"? He always presented me with "live" so nothing else much mattered to me. I felt that it was just going to be a temporary inconvenience but dying was not an option.

You see, although my doctors may have thought that I was not going to live very long based on the initial CAT scan, they never shared those thoughts with me until after it was clear that dying was not an option. I do remember when I first heard that I might have the "C", my reaction really surprised me. I thought that if this was my time to go then so be it ... my work here must be done and my family no longer needs me. That I had given all that I could and they were ready to move on. I had a great life and a fantastic family, if my time was up so be it because I was so fortunate to have had the time that I had.

I want to give some credit to a personal family friend, Dr. Gary Witman. You see after I met with Dr. Sax, Gary asked me to stop by with the disks of the CAT scan. He took a lot of time to review them with me. He went into much more detail than Dr. Sax had and explained everything to me and what the options were. After having gotten over the

initial shock that I was seriously sick from Dr. Sax, to hear the details a second time from Gary was much easier to understand and digest. Again, just another person reinforcing that I was going to get great treatment and be fine. Gary also suggested that I look into some of the centers for Cancer such as Mayo Clinic, MD Anderson, Sloan Kettering, and Dana-Farber.

Back to my test week; after the MRI I had a colon exam, bone scan and biopsy. Thursday evening around 9PM, I received a telephone call from Dr. Sax. You need to know that we had a discussion and I asked him to call me Malcolm - that my father was Mr. Itkin. Harry had no problem calling me Malcolm. However, on Thursday evening when he called he said, "Mr. Itkin, we got the test results back from the biopsy..." He gave me the name of the mass, ***Solitary Fibrous Tumor and/or Spindle Cell Neoplasm*** and suggested that I go online and check it out before our appointment Friday morning.

The only place that I could find any information was always under the heading of Sarcoma which I knew was a cancer. So needless to say I did not sleep very well that night. You see, when Dr. Sax gave me the list of scenarios, the worst case was a Sarcoma. So for the first time, I was feeling a little less optimistic about my situation. Especially, since he called me late at night and was so formal.

The next morning I went to meet with Dr. Sax. I was brought into an examining room and told that the doctor would be with me shortly. The door in my room was open and Harry walked passed and saw me and paused, "*Malcolm I will be in with you in just a minute*". Now we are back to informal and I am put a little bit at ease. When Harry walked into the room he said that the biopsy results were back and they are not as bad as they could have been. It seems that the tumor in my abdomen was a very large mass but very slow-growing. It could have been in me as long as twenty years. Because it was so slow-growing the urgency was no longer present. Dr. Sax said that was very good news because the surgery was major and he was glad that we would have plenty of time to prepare. Also, the Jewish holidays were coming up and he was going to be out of town. He said that he did not want to operate and then have to leave town. Because we had some time, Dr. Sax thought that we could schedule the surgery for the middle of May. This is probably the meeting where he explained the extensiveness of the surgery and the fact there could be major complications. It was major surgery and my body could react negatively. Thus he felt it was very important to be around for the duration of my surgery and recovery. I am pretty sure that it was this day that he told me that I could die on the table. Although, he hastened to add that he had never lost anyone on the table.

Well, since it was going to be several weeks before the surgery, I asked Dr. Sax what he thought of me getting a second opinion. He thought that it was a great idea and I told him that I was thinking of going to Dana-Farber. Harry thought that was an excellent place to go. Now remember, I think that Dr. Harry Sax is the greatest surgeon in the world and I am very excited that he is going to be taking care of me.

BLESSING NUMBER SIX ... I went up to Dana-Farber for my consult. It was on a Monday in April. Upon return from Dana-Farber I took my youngest son, Eli to Temple Beth-El as we do every Monday for him to lead the minyon service. For all the years that we have been at Temple Beth-El, I never remember ever seeing Dr. Sax there. On this day, he and his wife were present. After the service, he came over to me to say hello and ask about my visit to Dana-Farber. Now I am in trouble; you see I was very impressed with the doctor that I met with at Dana-Farber. Especially, when he told me that the only surgery that he does is Sarcoma surgery. Dana-Farber is the leading center in the country for Sarcoma Cancer. So I am dealing with some issues because I really like Dr. Sax and want him to take care of me. Dana-Farber is in Boston and at least an hour drive away. On the other hand, Dr. Sax has done three Sarcoma surgeries in his career and Dr. Raut does about three a week.

Back to my discussion with Harry; I told him about my meeting and how they wanted to do further studies on the pathology of the biopsy. He told me that he would make whatever was needed available. We talked briefly and then walked out of the sanctuary together. Dr. Sax had parked his car in the front of the building and was trying to figure out how to go out the front door as opposed to walking out the back and having to walk around the building. I offered to let him out the front door and relock it after he exited. Well, **BLESSING NUMBER SIX** came as I watch Harry limp down the walk way to his car. That was clearly a message from above telling me not to have someone in pain operate on me! Later, I asked Harry about the limp and he told me that he had hurt himself the past weekend while running a marathon.

At this point, I know that I am going to Dana-Farber. The problem is that I am worried about my care after the surgery when I come home and should there be a complication. Also, I really like Dr. Harry Sax and want him to be my surgeon. So while I am trying to figure out how to handle this challenge, I have not told anyone that I made up my mind to go to Dana-Farber for the surgery.

This was the beginning of April. Dr. Sax as well as Dr. Raut basically felt that there was no hurry for the surgery and that the middle of May would work out best for all. Because I was feeling well and nothing was bothering me my doctors told me that I can do whatever I wanted. **BLESSING NUMBER SEVEN AND EIGHT:** I decided to go to a convention in Hartford, CT on April 19th and also planned a trip with Ari to visit his college, the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

The trip to Hartford was very important for me. I would be around very positive people and given the journey that I was about to embark on, I felt that I needed all the positive support that I could get. My decision proved to be a very good one because I got everything that I wanted and needed. I came home charged and ready for my journey.

Another very important event was the trip that Ari and I took to Winston-Salem, NC. It was great for the two of us, certainly for me. We drove and Ari and I were in the car for almost twenty hours on the way down. Coming home, we went a different way and that trip was only about thirteen hours. The weather could not have been better and the trip

and everything about it could not have been more perfect. If death was in my near future, I would be ready for it because I was sure that Ari was going to be headed for greatness. Everyone at the college was terrific - the students, Deans, and faculty. Remember in a couple of weeks, I was scheduled for *MAJOR* surgery and had no idea of the outcome.

Although at this point I must hasten to add that my view was pretty positive. You see now I knew that at one point my doctors thought that I was going to die and given that scenario I did not feel that six weeks out of my life was much given I knew that I was going to have a life! Sure there were risks but I have the best surgeon in the country to operate on me and the surgery was taking place at the number one Sarcoma Cancer Center in the country. I was not worried. I had also removed most of the negative from my life.

I set things up with my Uncle Allen on the Itkin side of the family and my Aunt Jackie on the Seevak side. They would be my family spokespersons. I shared all my doctors reports with my Uncle Allen and given he was a doctor he would understand what was going on with me better than I and would be in a very good position to explain to other family members. I felt that in this way I would avoid the people who meant well but would put negative thoughts in my head. For example, understand I am not a doctor; I have the best doctors in the world looking after me plus the advantage of some divine assistance. So I place a lot of trust in their knowledge and experience. So if my doctor runs a test and tells me that my blood work is normal why would I question him? Well, a family member upon hearing that my blood work was normal asked why my doctor did not check my lymph nodes. That raised some doubt in my mind. Actually, I was pretty certain that my doctors knew what they were doing and just because I did not know that the lymph nodes were checked does not mean that my medical crew was not checking. Later, I did raise the question to one of the doctors and was reassured that that was all part of the blood work. You see, why would I want to talk with people who mean well but know very little, yet could get those negative demons working in my brain? **BLESSING NUMBER NINE** was my decision to remove myself from the possible negative people providers and to only surround myself with people who would be supportive and help me maintain a very strong positive mental attitude.

BLESSING NUMBER TEN came with my decision to go to Dana-Farber. On April 14, 2008, Suzy and I drove up to Dana-Farber to meet with Dr. Raut and Michelle (his PA). This was a wonderful meeting. I instantly developed a respect for Dr. Raut. He was very confident yet empathic. I remember asking him why I should have him do the surgery over Dr. Sax at the Miriam. He said that he did not know anything about the Miriam but he only did Sarcoma surgery, nothing else. That Dana-Farber was the leading Sarcoma center in the United States with the possible exception of Sloan Kettering in New York. Well, that was pretty much a no brainer ... did I want to have someone operate on me who has done three Sarcoma surgeries in his career or someone who does three a week? I was very confident with Dr. Raut and later I will tell you some stories about Dr. Raut that will let you know exactly how outstanding this doctor is.

The story continues but we are only to April 14, 2008 and my surgery was on May 15, 2008. After that I followed up with Radiation treatments over the summer months. We are now going into the start of 2009 and I am not cancer free, however I must hasten to add that I am symptom free. My medical team is watching me very closely and I am on no medications or treatment plan at this time. There are many more people to mention who are part of my support group (PMA builders) but time and space does not permit me to continue with this first volume. There will be more information on the rest of my story forthcoming.

May 4, 2009

Well this was a very interesting day to say the least. I dropped Eli off at school a little before 8:00AM and then left for Boston with stop for gasoline on my way. I got to Dana-Farber in plenty of time for my 9:45AM appointment for blood work. I was greeted by my parking lot friend who always has a smile and is happy to see me. He took my car and parked it for me and wished me well for my visit.

When I got to the ninth floor they took me right in for my blood work. As usual the ladies were very good and make this boring job of taking my blood pleasant. It also helps that they are good at what they do.

Then I went on my way for my CAT Scan at L1 and on my journey I went to L2 to say hello to my friends from Radiation. Neil is always fun to talk with and a very caring young man. Also, ran into several others who remembered me from the summer and we talked a little and of course they all told me how good I looked! I am just happy that I was able to walk in and say hello - many are not as fortunate.

After I completed my scan, I went to get something to eat and bumped into Dr. Raut, who had just picked up lunch to take upstairs. As usual, he had a great smile for me and said that he was looking forward to seeing me upstairs. Besides being an outstanding surgeon he is a very fine person and caring doctor.

After lunch I decided to just go upstairs and wait for my 1:30PM appointment with Drs. Raut and Butrynski. On this journey I met two other patients of Dr. Raut's who both had Sarcoma. One young lady was with her husband and she told me that she first presented six years ago and she was in for her third sarcoma. Another young man, only twenty-eight years old was here to see Dr. Raut. He had an abdominal sarcoma that was the size of a grapefruit but he had complications ... for one thing Dr. Raut did not do the original surgery and so when he had an abscess, Dr. Raut got involved for the corrective action. This young man had just completed his chemo-therapy and he had additional tumors in his abdomen. In the waiting room we all talked, although as you can imagine, I did most of the talking. Basically, singing Dr. Raut's praises and keeping everything on a positive note.

Well, they moved me into an examining room relatively quickly and then Michelle came in to visit. She always has a great smile on her face and it is a pleasure to visit with her. It is sort of like coming home and feeling cared and loved. I asked her if she had seen my scan and she said no. I thought maybe she was coming in to warm me up but she was just being Michelle. Then Dr. Raut came into the room. He always lights up my day. I think that he walks on water but for some reason he feels that he always has to be the one to deliver, what he thinks, the bad news. We talked and at some point he said that wanted me to consider chemo because there were tumors showing up in my abdomen and liver. Of course, I told him that I was glad that he could now be my surgeon again and he smiled but said that he did not think surgery was called for at this time.

Now I must deviate at this point to tell you that although Dr. Raut thought that he was delivering bad news he actually gave me good news. You see the tumors in my lungs had not grown. If you remember in February one of them was doubling in size every two months. Dr. Raut and Dr. Butrynski got me to see Dr. Colson to discuss surgical removal of this tumor. Since I did not want surgery, I began a process of mentally trying to stop feeding the tumor (it may be called visualization). In April you will recall that the tumor had shrunk. But the others in my lungs had grown. Well, I only focused on the fast growing tumor, so in April I focused on all the lung tumors and added an additional technique that Dr. Rosenberg had offered of having the "PAC MEN" go after the tumors. Well, it appears that this "VISUALIZATION" technique worked because the lung tumors had not change in size since April. I only worked on the lungs, who knew about the tumors in the liver and abdomen! So when Dr. Raut thought that he was delivering bad news he really gave me good news. He basically told me that I had the tumors on the run and just need to keep after them. It is not very scientific but who cares!

Also, I must hasten to add that at the point of the visit I still had no symptoms and was feeling very good. You see the doctors are stressing out over these scans but I am choosing to let them worry about that stuff and I am just going on doing what I can control, ATTITUDE and perhaps the Visualization.

Well, at some point Dr. Butrynski entered the room and it was like a family reunion for me. I really love these people! More important, I feel so comfortable that they are doing everything possible to make sure that I am getting the absolute best possible care available. What a BLESSING to have been directed to Dana-Farber and then have this outstanding team of doctors looking after me. I just pray that they are around for another thirty years or so in order that I can continue to get their great care.

Anyway, Dr. Butrynski gave me pictures of the new tumors and we discussed some treatment options. He showed me a very encouraging study just recently presented from MD Anderson. However, I had some questions for him about the study and he was going to look into it further for me. We decided not to do anything until after my next visit in about six weeks. That gives me six weeks to work my magic on these new tumors while not forgetting the ones in my lungs. I am not sure what this is going to do

for medical science but it is definitely keeping me around and that works just great for me!

July, 2009

First, let me say that I just came back from a week of great tennis at the International Tennis Hall of Fame in Newport. I was a volunteer driver and it was fantastic. Eli and I drove down to Newport every morning leaving home about 6:30AM and many nights we did not get back until midnight. Eli played a lot of tennis and spent a lot of time with some of his ball kid friends. I of course, spent my time driving the players around and watching them play tennis. I was also given the job of picking Bud Collins and his wife Anita up from Brookline and driving them down to the Hall of Fame. Then of course, I was the one that drove them home from the tournament on Sunday. They are two wonderful people and I enjoyed my time with them immensely. So I had a great week and am feeling pretty good. A little tired from all the traveling but I am not twenty years old either.

On June 29, 2009 I went up to Dana-Farber for my regular six week check up. I wish that I could say that it was a good visit but I can not. It seems that the CAT Scan showed that my tumors are spreading and growing since the May visit. Suzy went up with me and my doctor actually used the word "terminal" with us. That did not make me happy at all! I told my doctor that my visits were becoming stressful and I wanted to make them less frequent. So I am not going back to Dana-Farber until October. Of course, should I feel a change or have pain and/or discomfort I will call them immediately.

Sorry that this report is so short but I would rather focus on the good things that are going on in my life. For example, the weekend prior to my visit the boys and I drove up to Maine for some LL Bean shopping and Lobsters at Harrasecette(?). We were doing our part in helping the economy. On Sunday, I left the boys for a couple of hours at the hotel so that I could go visit a dear friend and her family. It was an awesome weekend for me!

September 2009

Today is the third Friday since my attack (Blood Sugar). I have been in the hospital ever since. I was really blessed on Friday morning that Ari noticed that I was not my self and called 911 immediately. He also notified Suzy you call DF and Dr. Butrynski. He immediately started to make arrangements for me to be transported to Brigham and Women's in Boston. They have been working on stabilizing my sugar ever since. We are not there yet but very close. It appears based on the hardware that has been place in my body that I will be on sugar for the rest of my life. And very possible that I will never eat food again (bowel blockage). I am in NO pain and my brain still works so life

is not so bad. I do believe that I have a lot of input as to when we "pull the plug" but I am in no hurry. Especially, as long as I have no pain.

So I guess you can definitely say that I have had a life style change. Some of my doctors I call the hover group because they do not understand why I have not died yet. For example, a week ago they tried to kill me with a GTube. I really did want to terminate my life at that point and then one morning I woke up and it was out of me. Nothing that I did and certainly nothing that any of my doctors did. They were pretty insistent on getting the tube back in but I kept telling them that the LORD pulled this out because I did not need it! And I actually have not needed it yet. They are truly puzzled by that one.

So I do not think that my mission has been completed yet and that is probably why I am still around. I certainly have no problem with that. I also have no idea what my mission is but then again that is his job, not mine.

The Game!

One day I received a telephone call from my youngest son, Eli. It was a Saturday and he had a basketball game. He told me that this was the first basketball game that he was going to play where I was not there to watch. At that point, I knew that I was headed home and I quickly told Eli that I would be there for his next game the following Saturday.

Four days later, Malcolm was headed home in an Ambulance. When we arrived at my home, I realized that it had been almost five weeks since I had been in Rhode Island! The EMT's asked me if I wanted them to carry me into the house or if I wanted to walk in (with them by my side of course). Without hesitation I said, "Walk!" About the same time that I was getting out of the Ambulance, Eli had just gotten out of school and was walking home and had just turned the corner on to Sheffield Avenue and he saw the Ambulance and me at the other end of Sheffield Avenue. As I took my first step up the stairs to the house, I heard in the distance this LOUD SCREAM, "ABBA!" from Eli of course, and the tears came right to my head, HAPPY TEARS but none the less tears. What a wonderful emotional event!

Well, I continued to walk up those stairs to get into my home. It was a lot more difficult than I had imagined but it felt so good to be home! Suzy, of course, was inside waiting for me and had everything ready for me to feel totally welcomed home! Okay, this was Wednesday about 1:30PM. Now remember, my goal is to get rested and adjusted so that come Saturday at 3:00PM I am able to go watch Eli and his team mates play their second league basketball game. Remember, I missed the first game the week before. Well, Saturday came and I was feeling as I had hoped. Suzy helped me shower and get ready and then she drove me over to the game. Remember, I am on life support for the rest of my life. I can not go anywhere with out my backpack which has my food supply plugged into my body that goes through a central port. But it is very portable and I was not sure that anyone even noticed the tubes.

Well, we got to the gymnasium and the first person that I saw when I stepped in was Eli. He was working the snack bar. I went over and got a big hug and kiss from him but his smile said it all. I turned around to head into the gym and his team mates headed toward me. One by one they came up to me and gave me a big hug and welcomed Abba back. Notice I did not say shake my hand but each and every one of them gave Abba a HUG! I did not cry then but I did after the game whenever I told anyone about it. And there are many tears (of happiness) running down my face as this is being written. The Game was awesome. It was two undefeated teams playing each other. It was a great game and the ultimate score was decided by just one point and Eli's team emerged the victor. I might hasten to add that Eli played extremely well. In fact, he shot a basket that put the team up by two points. Had he not scored this basket earlier the final score of the game could have been very different. It just felt so good to be there watching them play ball as before. I was BLESSED with yet another Great Day.

October 2009

Eli Saved My Life!

I woke up this morning and I felt different. I didn't feel right; so I asked Eli to stay home from school. He stayed home to take care of me. What ever I needed, all I had to do was ask and he did it, with a good spirit and happy face, whether it was my meds or getting me ice to suck on, he did it!

I didn't want to be alone. I needed help and I knew I couldn't do anything by myself so having Eli home made my day easier. Little did I know he would also save my life! I had jello and strawberry ices which made me need to use the bath room. I went into the bathroom and asked Eli to help change me, after that I don't remember a thing. I guess my blood sugar dropped and I became incoherent and passed out. Eli called 911. They arrived and discovered my sugar had dropped to 19! They gave me a shot of glucose and got me into bed.

According to Susie, while I was struggling in the bathroom, Eli stayed with me, rubbing my back and feet, telling me everything would okay. Now this is a fourteen year old boy that we are talking about, my son Eli, I love you.

I find it very interesting that this blood sugar journey started on August 21st with Ari saving my life and now Eli had the same opportunity and came through like a trooper. I feel so fortunate that my two boys are both responsible for me still being here today. A true blessing.

ITKIN, MALCOLM, 63, of Pawtucket, died Friday, October 16, 2009. He was the beloved husband of Sue (Shein) Itkin and the son of Sydney Itkin and the late Anna (Seevak) Itkin.

Malcolm was a camp director at Kamp Kohut in Maine and was a member of Temple Beth-El and its' Brotherhood.

Besides his wife and father, he is survived by his children Jenny, Ari, and Eli; and his brother Harold Itkin.

His funeral service will be held Monday, October 26, at 11 AM in the SUGARMAN-SINAI MEMORIAL CHAPEL, 458 Hope St., Providence with a burial in Swan Point Cemetery, Providence.