

THE KEEPER OF THE ZOO

NOTES ON A JOURNEY

By Cecil Wallace

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NOTES OF CECIL WALLACE

CHRISTMAS IS COMING 1990

My partner and I had been looking forward to our second Christmas together. We were happy! What could go wrong, when everything in our life was going so well? Around November, I got sick. We could not understand why I was so sick all of a sudden.

We were living in our apartment on Woolwich Street and it was nice to have our own spot. We were both working at the Baker Street Bistro. We were in the process of buying the restaurant, as that was both our life goals. David Roughfy, my dear friend was going to give us a loan to start our very own restaurant. This was what I wanted and worked for thirteen years to gain. Our life was complete and happy.

I am writing these notes in September, 1993. I just got up to open the window because there are spirits knocking outside and they want to come in, so I opened the window to allow them in. It feels wonderful, being guided strongly today.

CHRISTMAS HAS COME (1990)

I decided to go to the doctor's to see what was going on with my health. I had to take time out from work because I was so sick. What could it be? Date: December 13, 1990.

I went to see Doctor Pinksen, AIDS test; you want me to get an AIDS test? I don't feel there is any reason for me to get an AIDS test. I must have the flu. I decided to have the test. Now, I have to go home and tell my partner and we have to wait seven days for the results. My partner gave me lots of support. At least, they did not tell me to relax because how the hell are you going to sleep or even relax, while you are waiting for the results?

I tried to put the idea out of my mind, but it hung there thick and heavy. "An AIDS test?" This only happens to people, who are single and not in love. I was in Love.

I spoke to some people in Kitchener today.

Did you hear the news? Brad has AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). Wow! I almost fell to the ground. My last partner, Brad, who I met in 1985 and lived with for a year and a half has AIDS. What is this! All of a sudden, the word AIDS has consumed my life. I cried a lot and then the "fear". Oh my God, I think I have AIDS. I must run, no, because where could I run to and for what. My AIDS test is not back yet. Wow! Brad has AIDS.

I told my partner, my seven days are up. Feeling better and back to work! Must make a phone call to Dr. Pinksen... I made the phone call in my office at the restaurant.

"Yes, Mr. Wallace?"

"Is my test back?"

"No it has not come in as of yet. We will call you when it comes in."

Relief... work is very busy. I got lost in my work, I loved my work. On December 23, 1990 the phone rang at work, Dr. Pinksen's office.

"Cecil, you must come over to the office this afternoon."

The dining room was full of people. "I can't leave now, it is lunch time."

"Ok then, come over to the office this afternoon."

The dining room was full of laughter and cheer. It was Christmas party time. After I helped the staff clean up after lunch and get ready for dinner service, I went over to the doctor's office, only a block away. What a long walk, seemed like forever. I went into the doctor's office. Now, the door opened and in came the doctor.

"Cecil, your test came back positive, what you have is HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)."

My mind raced. I felt like I was going to be sick. My body temperature changed. No! This cannot be right. Stamped by the health department and checked twice. The doctor tried to comfort me. We must start treatment right away.

"What did you say doctor?"

I want to go home. I was to go in on Monday and talk to him. The walk down Wyndham Street was long and lonely! I walked back to work. So alone, in such a crowd! How do I explain this to my partner? Go back to work, go to my office and sit down—WOW!

I go to the basement; here come the tears. I cried for at least an hour. I must tell my partner. When my partner came into my office, he started crying the moment he saw my face. Not many words had to be spoken at this point. My partner said “let’s go home.” We both walked home and we cried all the way. The pain in my heart and the pain in my partner’s eyes were too much to handle. I wanted to die!

The apartment seemed cold; we went off to bed to sleep and cry in each other’s arms. When I woke up, my AIDS virus was still there. I wanted it to be a bad dream, but it was real. No, No, No, Yes! I felt my life was over. It was very hard on my partner. What should we do?

We went over to my partner’s grandmother’s house and told her. We all cried.

“Let’s put up the Christmas tree.”

So, the three of us decorated it. It was sad. Would this be my last Christmas? The pain on their faces was too much for me to see. I was no longer in the Christmas spirit. Why? My life was over. I will try to enjoy Christmas. Seems dark, empty and alone...

A NEW FRIEND

Then something wonderful happened. A puppy! What should we name her? We decided on Paula. Yes, let’s go to London to see her. We went to the farm, where Paula was born. My partner and Edna like another dog. I stood in the room to order a puppy.

“They are not ready yet,” the lady said. She said you will have to order one of these seven and pick it up after Christmas. I did not want to wait that long.

My partner said, “Let’s take this little male dog.” Just at that moment, out of the cage came Paula.

The lady said, “Oh, she is left over from the last litter. No one wanted her. Oh, she was a runt.” She said, “My husband calls her little monkey.” Paula ran around my feet and looked up at me. I fell in love. I picked her up and held her in my arms. She licked my face. I wanted this one. Her name is Paula.

What a joy came into my heart. I forgot all about HIV. Joy took over. Her name will be Paula (Lady) Wallace Thicksen. We paid for her and put her in the car. Six weeks old. Let’s go home. I was so happy. My heart was full of joy.

We were all happy. But driving home, the thought of HIV came back into my mind. So, I will make this last Christmas of mine a joyful one. Lady Paula Wallace Thicksen was asleep in the front seat of the car. Our first car ride together. When I got home, I took her right over to meet my dear friends, Bob and Vianne. I put her inside my coat, with just her head sticking out. They loved her. They had just lost their dog so it was hard on them, but they were happy for me.

Then, I went home, put Paula in her cage, sat it on the dresser beside the bed and went to bed. She started to cry (HIV is far from my mind). I got up and opened the door and picked her up and went back to bed. She crawled under my arm and went to sleep. I went off to sleep. The day was over. I was so happy. This was my first day of a wonderful friendship. This was going to be a wonderful Christmas. My heart was full of joy. I forgot all about the HIV and the pain went away. Another day over!

DAY OF DENIAL - DECEMBER 24, 1990

The next day, I went to the doctor's office. I started to relive the day before, going back to the same office, where I found out I was HIV positive. When I woke up that morning, the HIV and fear were still alive. I guess this is not just a bad dream. My life felt like it was over. I was only twenty-nine years old and these things were not supposed to happen, when you are so young. I wonder if they mixed up the paper work at the lab, where the blood work was done. AND—maybe I did not have HIV. I must ask the doctor.

The doctor entered the room. “Yes, Cecil, you must start treatment, but I am not sure how to treat you.”

AZT, what was that? I would have taken anything that day. Okay doctor, let's just get started.

“We have to check your T-4 cell count,” the doctor said.

“What is a T-4 cell count?” I asked.

He explained to me that there are helper cells to protect your system from illness. He did the blood work and sent it off to London. Results were not good!

He explained that the treatment was important and that I was to take 500 mg of AZT a day. (Little did I know then, that this would be at the point, where my medical awareness of terms and treatments would begin). T-4 cells, Helper cells, wow, I did not even know I had such things. But I guess it is okay now because I have a drug called AZT and that will kill all of these cells and I will make new ones and it will be okay. I must get home right away and take one of these pills so that it can start to work.

Not feeling too bad. Paula is here beside me. She makes me feel happy. Wow, this bottle of pills is so large and this is to last me for only a month. The first two weeks went by. Not feeling so good. Sick a lot! Why? I don't understand. These pills are supposed to make me feel better. I found it hard to stay awake for the rest of Christmas. This will be my last one.

I stopped working and we moved in with Edna. We became very close. It was good to feel like I had a family around to give me strength. I don't feel good. Why are these drugs not making me feel better yet? Must sleep! All I wanted to do was sleep. The days were spent in and out of bed. It was so hard to adjust. I wanted to do things, wanted to be a part of living, not a part of dying. Must get out of bed and try to do something. No. The thought was good but the strength was not there. Was this how it was going to be? Only awake and alert two to three hours a day?

Edna and my partner were great about taking care of me. I am sure it was not easy to see me fail, in front of their eyes. I was becoming aware that when I had my good hours, I needed to make the most of them. I started to work in the garden. This was good. It felt good, when I was in the garden. The soil was so rich and the strength I could feel from Mother Nature was real.

Oh, my body tells me it is time to sleep. Back to bed and rest. My life became very dark and my spirits were poor. I wanted to die.

NEW OUTLOOK

The year is 1992. It was spent in much the same way: sleep and more sleep. How long was this going to last? I am taking 500 mg of AZT a day, so things should soon turn around and I will feel better. I decided to go home. Must go home! I was told to get my affairs in order. Wow! This must be it. Must go home! I needed my family at this point. I moved home to Prince Edward Island and stayed six months. It was not working out. There was not enough knowledge about HIV or treatments there. I must go back to Ontario for my treatments.

I went back to Guelph. I must search out for myself, what is going on. I went to the AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington County. It was hard to walk into the office and admit I needed help. I was very accepted and made to feel it was OK and there were more people on the same walk as I was on. At this time, I met Garry Spears, who later became a special friend and a close soul mate.

My feelings on finding out about my own information on treatments started to come to the forefront. There were so many medications and trials and no one was really sure of the end results. Would I be part of a study or should I take the chance? Would I try drugs to see what strange things could happen for other people? Yes, I must. Let's try something called "combination therapy". Let's see how the AIDS fighting drugs will work, when we put them together to try to kill this thing called AIDS. Yes, this must be the answer. I will try it.

At this time, I was about to meet one of the key players, who would help me on my walk with AIDS. Her name was Dr. Anne-Marie Zajdlik. It became very clear to me that she was interested in working with me and she became one of my primary caregivers in my fight. She made me feel it was OK. The girls, who work in the office, were also very helpful and I was happy that I found a place I could feel cared for and safe.

Now, I needed a good drugstore with someone, who was interested and willing to work with me and the doctor. This is when I met Tim at Prescription Place. It was clear that these people were interested in my fight with HIV. I wanted to fight as long as I could. Dr. Maurice Genereux, a Toronto physician came into my life at this time. Things were looking good. I was at peace because I had doctors, who were going to do everything that was possible to help me along this path of treatment.

I needed help and soon. I felt the AIDS virus was taking over my insides and I was losing the battle. We tried combination drug treatments. So many drugs to take and to try to keep them all in order! They also had to be taken, when they were meant to be taken. This must be the answer.

Then, things started to happen. My liver was not going to take it any longer. I went to see Maurice and Anne-Marie, after six months on this treatment. I had failed and the damage was real and made me very scared. My life became a matter of A-B-C. What should I do next? Just try to stay healthy. My blood work was not good and I could see myself beginning to fail. This was it. I was sure it was over.

THE KEEPER OF THE ZOO

A man named Terry Jackson was recommended to me to help me put my affairs in order. He was a wonderful help and made me feel that things would be done the way I wanted them to be. This all happened in 1993! According to my blood work, I should really have been dead. At this time, I began to call my sick insides “the zoo” and I saw myself as the “keeper” of the zoo.

In August, I decided to go home to Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.) to spend time with my family, while I still had enough strength. This was when I was very sick and messed up. I was experiencing some really strange feelings and I was unsure what was going on. My very close and special friend, Gloria was there with me. If she had not been by my side, I don't feel I would be here today to write about it and share my story.

I experienced many strange feelings of fear and loneliness. This was just before I returned to P.E.I. to see my family. I was suffering from symptoms of MAC (Mycobacterium avium complex) and I knew it could affect the lungs, intestines and spread throughout the body, infecting the blood, spleen, liver, bone marrow and lymph nodes. I felt I was being followed and that someone or something was out to get me. The morning that I got on the plane to go home, I was feeling very good. My mind must have been asleep still because the fear of being followed was not there. We were halfway to Toronto, when the feelings returned. I felt that someone was following me but I could not understand why. Later, I would find answers to this mystery but all I knew was how I felt. I got on the plane and I was on my way home.

HOME TO THE ISLAND

It was a good feeling to be going home to my family, where I could be safe and taken care of for a while. But, the plane ride seemed to take forever and all I wanted was to get there. When I got off the plane, I was sure I had been followed all the way to Halifax, where I met my sister, Audrey. We planned to drive to P.E.I. It was good to see her and it made me feel that I was now safe.

It was such a nice ride through Nova Scotia. I felt happy and at peace because I was going home. When we arrived at the boat, it was wonderful to see the water. I could smell the salt in the air. We boarded the boat and when we parked the car, another car had pulled up alongside us. I saw it had Ontario license plates. Oh no, those must be the people, who had followed me all the way here. My sister left our car to sit upstairs on the ferry but I stayed in our car. As soon as she left, I locked all the doors and put my seat in the reclining position. I fell asleep. This was the best thing I could have done. The anxiety was so strong that I wasn't sure I could tell anyone about my fears so I kept them all to myself.

The drive on the Island was beautiful. My heart was full of joy and peace at being home. I really enjoyed the time I spent with my sister. I felt very close to her and we both looked forward to getting to her place. Stella had gone to the airport to pick up Paula. Of course, when we arrived at my sister's house, Paula came running out of the house to greet me. There were lots of kisses and she was so happy to see us. It felt so good to have her on the Island with me. My heart was so full of joy and peace and I could smell the ocean. The ocean had called me home and I was there to respond to it.

It became clear to me that my anxiety had gone away. It was such a feeling of relief. I was glad to finally be able to relax. We had a wonderful evening and when it was time to go to bed, I slept out in a mobile home my sister had on her side of the house. It would be good to go to sleep. When I was in bed, I heard a car drive around the parking lot. The anxiety returned—they must have followed me here. What was I to do? After some time passed, I calmed myself down and felt much better. Paula came in and we were both tired and fell asleep. The anxiety had gone again and I was at peace with myself.

It was such a roller coaster ride and I wanted to get off but I was not sure how to do so. I spent the week at my sister's. Every night, I went through the same feeling and spent a lot of time talking on the telephone with my friend, Peter. He helped me settle down, when I had an anxiety attack. I wanted to get in touch with my dear friend, Gloria as she had been there to help me with those fears before I had come to the Island. But, she was in Vancouver and I could not reach her by phone because she was travelling a lot. No one was sure where she was at any given time.

The night before I was to leave my sister's house to see the rest of my family, who lived on the west end of the Island, I went out to sit on Audrey's deck. I looked for the blue star. When I found it, I felt Gloria's strong presence with me. She was thinking about me. This put me at peace and our spirits were once again united from one coast to the other. Our spirits were clear and strong. The most wonderful feelings of peace came over me. It was wonderful.

The next day, my sister and I left to see the rest of the family. I was looking forward to seeing my family and all the kids. It was O'Leary Day (my home town) and there was going to be a parade. Everyone was going. I was so tired all I wanted to do was sleep. I explained to the kids that Uncle Cecil was not feeling good and he needed to rest. I told them that tomorrow I would spend time with them. It felt good to be at home in the house, where I was a child and could be safe.

I went to bed and slept for two days. I just could not seem to be able to get enough sleep. That day, I called Dr. Verna, my old family doctor. He was glad to hear from me and I went to see him. He was already aware of my fight with HIV/AIDS and he was so willing to help me. He is such a caring and wonderful man. We talked for at least an hour. I told him about my feelings of anxiety and how they came over me and how it made me feel. I felt like everyone in my home town was watching me because it was common knowledge that I had AIDS. He was so good to me. He told me to keep my chin up and walk proud because he was going to be there for me, when I needed him.

Dr. Verna and I were the ones to break the ice on AIDS education in our home town and we needed to continue to educate. He told me to call him anytime, night or day. He put me at peace with myself. He then gave me some pills to help me out. It was clear that he was going to be there for me. He was a little concerned that I would try to end my life.

He asked if that was what I was thinking. I looked at him and I told him that my fight with AIDS was not over yet. I did not fight this long to just end it. I was feeling much better and I was at peace with myself.

I went home and took a pill and went to bed. I slept for another day. I don't think my family understood why I slept so much but they were all aware of my ill health and were very understanding. It was so wonderful to have my family around me. I felt so blessed to have such a large, loving family. It was good to be at home.

Through all of this, my AIDS did not go away. It was there eating my insides out. It was real. My health started to fail and it seemed to do so at a rapid rate. I was not sure what was going on but I was in the most pain I had ever experienced. My legs—what was going on with my legs? The pain was sharp and my feet had no feelings left in them. I was sick to my stomach. I went to bed and cried all night and rubbed my legs to try to get some pain to stop. It was not working but I did not take my painkillers with me from Ontario. My legs became weak. I could hardly hold myself up on them. My legs were getting very small and I was rapidly losing weight. What was going on?

I was getting very scared and it was becoming apparent that my virus was trying to destroy my body. Each day, I lived with the pain and I tried with every ounce of effort that I had to try and enjoy my time with my family. The pills I was taking for my anxiety were working. I was eating bottles of Tylenol, which seemed to help.

My family had arranged for me to use the car so I could get around and spend time with all my family. I spent a lot of time at my grandparents' house as it was peaceful there. I went up to the graveyard just beside my grandparents' house to see the plot, where my ashes would be put. It is right next to my grandparents' plot, where I wanted to be. It felt good to know I was going to come home to rest on the farm, where I had so many childhood memories. These were my roots and I could feel them so strongly that day. I love my family and our deep, settled roots.

Also, I spent time driving around the Island and looking at the wonderful colours of the rich landscape. It is such a beautiful Island and the memories are wonderful. When I stayed at my brother's house, I spent a lot of time at the ocean. I went for many long walks along the ocean and cliffs. The power of the strong waves and the sounds of the sea were all around. I drew strength from its power and strength, to fight in my walk with AIDS. The energy filled my body and I felt I could walk proud.

Two weeks had passed and my anxiety was under control. The pills that Dr. Verna gave me were working. Most days were spent visiting all my family. It was good to have them around me. While I was home, I went to the United Church to make plans for my memorial services, which would be held there. It is such a beautiful church inside. I met with John Fraser and we had a wonderful talk. It became clear to me that we did not agree in some ways about Heaven and Hell but we put them aside and planned my memorial service. It felt good to take care of this matter. I could rest in peace.

My days were getting short and it would soon be time to go back to Ontario. We had lots of family get-togethers and it was a festive time. I drew lots of energy and strength from the strong love and support of my family. The next day, my sister, Audrey came to get me, to return to Charlottetown. I would spend my last week on the Island at her place. So, I left my home town and said my goodbyes. It was hard. The pain on my mother's face as I left crushed me. Would we ever see each other again? She understood that I needed to be in Ontario, where I could get the best medical treatments so she let me go. There was a strong sense of peace and I assured her it was okay.

We left O'Leary and drove to my sister's house. I had one more week of vacation. As we drove through the countryside, the red soil, blue sky, blue water, green and yellow fields and the little painted farms bursting with the colour of flowers were wonderful. I looked at my sister and said that this was such a beautiful Island. She said that she could never leave the Island and all of its beauty. I had such a strong desire to move home again to the Island and spend my last days in this place that I grew up to love.

FRIENDS ON THE ISLAND

While I was spending my last week with my sister, I was able to get together with some fellow patrons of AIDS P.E.I. These people shared in my walk against and good fight with AIDS. I met some wonderful people and we shared our pain and how we were doing. Most of them had not been sick yet. It was clear to me that they were all scared yet they had never experienced the full impact of the pain of AIDS. There was one fellow named Mark, who was in the same boat as I. The rest of the guys were all going out that night so the meeting was coming to an end. They were going to party and wanted me to come along. I explained that I did not drink anymore and I was going home to rest.

After the others left, Mark and I sat and talked for hours. Our bond was real and our fears were the same. He showed me some information that he had just received from AIDS Vancouver. They had not yet discovered this thing called MAC that was killing AIDS patients. Mark had MAC. As he described the symptoms and pain he had, it was clear to me that I was feeling that way lately. My heart skipped a beat and I thought I was going to stop breathing. This must be what I have now. It makes sense. I have all the symptoms associated with MAC.

Mark and I ended our night sitting out on the AIDS Committee's steps watching falling meteors. We had formed a strong bond and it was clear that a friendship was developing. It was good to feel Mark's strength and not give up. He told me that he planned to fight it with every gram of strength he had in his body. We said our goodbyes and went our separate ways. Our spirits would meet again and we felt peace knowing we were on the same walk of life.

I was reaching the end of my stay on Prince Edward Island. It was time to go back to Ontario. I was looking forward to seeing my friends in Guelph. I had a great visit and made many memories that I would keep forever. We went to the airport and got Paula on her plane. She left the day before I was leaving from Halifax. My sister and I drove to Halifax, where I would fly out.

It was hard to leave the Island, the cradle in the gulf. I would miss the ocean and the power it gave me. It was time to return to Guelph. My sister, Stella and I said our goodbyes and I left. I was not feeling well at all. All I wanted to do was get on the plane and rest. I was so sick. It would be good to get to Guelph and see my doctors. Just as I sat down in my seat on the plane, I had an anxiety attack. Oh no! What was I to do? There was a man sitting three seats behind me and I was sure he was following me. I wanted to jump out of the plane. I took one of my pills and rested. The anxiety went away and I felt much better. It was becoming very clear that I had to get these anxiety attacks under control.

BACK IN ONTARIO

When my flight landed in Toronto, my dear friends, Scott and Max were there to greet me. My anxiety level was high because I was in a large crowd and all I wanted was to get out of the airport. The stairs were my only quick exit as people were lined up for the elevators. I hardly made it up all the stairs to the car in the parking lot. My legs were so weak and the pain was so sharp, strong and real to me. It must be this thing called MAC. I felt good knowing I would be back in Guelph soon, where I could get better medical care.

As soon as I arrived at my townhouse, I called the girls at Dr. Little's office. Chris said to just come in right away and she would get me in to see the doctor. I was weak and so scared that my legs were hardly strong enough to carry me there. Dr. Anne-Marie was on leave and Dr. Little was her replacement. We had developed a great friendship and it would be good to be in her care again.

I went in and Chris let me see her immediately. Dr. Little was shocked to see how much I had failed and how small my legs had become. She took action right away. I told her what I had heard about MAC and she was thinking the same thing. We learned more about MAC and how it can be treated.

I made an appointment with Dr. Maurice Genereux and Scott took me to see him. Dr. Genereux took one look at me and the words MAC came out of his mouth. He examined me and did my blood work. This was not good news I was hearing. This would be the final fight of my life. I did feel ready to give it everything I had and Dr. Genereux assured me he would do everything he could to help me.

MAC was my first opportunistic infection. It was caused by two similar types of bacteria called Mycobacterium Avium and Mycobacterium Intracellular. This was the primary cause of death in AIDS sufferers. Great, make my day! I wanted to die because I was not sure I would have enough fight left in me to fight this thing called MAC. It was apparent that I would fail at a faster rate than I had before. I had wanted to hear that I had just a simple flu—not MAC. Dr. Genereux called Dr. Little and things started to happen. He explained to Dr. Little that we did not have time to fool around with Cecil's treatments. The test results that were needed would take six weeks for analysis and we did not have time to wait for them. It was important to start treatment right away.

I left Dr. Genereux's office feeling scared, numb and in a daze. Scott and Rick were there for me and I drew strength from them and we drove back to Guelph. The drive seemed long and there was not much said. Wow! This had been a hell of a day. It would be interesting to see what tomorrow would bring.

CLOSING AND OPENING DOORS

Scott and Rick dropped me off at the townhouse. At this time, I was about to learn about another little problem that was about to explode any hope I would have about feeling better. While I was away to see my family, my partner decided that sex was the most important thing to him and had a little affair. It was clear he was only thinking about himself and he was willing to throw five years away. Trust, love and honesty were nowhere to be found in that room that day.

My life began to take on a new walk. All the old doors in my life were closing and they were closing hard and fast. Wow! Can all of this happen to one person in one day? I am sure there was a reason why but I couldn't see why at the time. As all the doors closed, I felt there was not any use in going on and why would I want to. It was at this moment that I remembered my last dream on Prince Edward Island. I had a dream that many doors in my life would start to close, when I returned to Guelph. It was such a peaceful dream. In its place, new doors would open and my life would become one of freedom, peace and walking with the guidance of white light. The peace I felt that day was wonderful and I could not believe that it was so clear to me, what was going to happen. At the end of the pathway I was now walking, there was a bright light and it was giving me strength. This would become a new chapter in my life. The spirits were strong and I saw again my friends David and Tony. It was clear that they were going to be there to guide me on my new walk. For at least a second, my pain went away.

This had become one hell of a day. Why are all these things coming down on my life and all on the same day? I took action and ended my five year relationship fast and clean. There would be no fight. Let's get it over. There was no time for me to waste or play games with my life. If this was what was meant to be, then, so be it. My heart was in wonder and I had become at peace with myself and what I was doing.

The list was made and things separated. You take this—I take that. I would keep Paula. She would need my care and I would need her happy little face around me for strength and compassion. Things were moving fast and it felt good. All of my friends drew close to me to help me out. I was to move to a farm, where I could live on one floor as my legs did not have enough strength to go up and down stairs.

Richard and Robert were wonderful and I could really feel that they wanted to help me out. They have become very close and I was so grateful to them for taking me into their home. This would be the answer and it was clear that I would do better living on the farm. I loved the farm and I was looking forward to living there.

Moving day felt good. Peter, Gloria, Richard, Scott, Robert and I soon packed up my things and carted them off to the farm. My strength was not good and they were giving me a hard time about overdoing it. I gave in and let them pack and move. Can you imagine I gave in? I am sure I drove them crazy, giving orders but I was sure they understood. My life was not my own anymore. It would become one ready for doctors, waiting rooms, needles, blood work, blood infusions, tests, tests and more tests. It was one to be shared with science and the wonders of it.

Things were changing very fast and I was finding it hard to keep up with the roller coaster ride, which was becoming faster and faster. This was all taking place in early August. I was awaiting the return of my dear friend and soul mate, Gloria from her stay in Vancouver. It would be good to see her again. The night she came home will be one that I will always remember. I felt at peace that she was going to be there for me as she knew what I was going through and we understood one another. Words never needed to be spoken as we read each other's minds. Her spirits were strong and her strength, which I leaned upon, was real.

A WALKING DRUG STORE

The time had come for me to go to all my doctors' appointments and try to make some sense of these things called MAC and AIDS. Through the month of September, I had 18 appointments with doctors in 30 days, with specialists, eye doctors, scopes, radiology at St. Mary's and more. I would become a walking drug store. My medications for the month of October cost \$1450.00. I was going to try some new treatments including the following: Mycobutin, Sulfamethoxazole, Cipro, Losec, Tylenol #2s, Beclomethasone and Triamcinolone Acetonide. The list was large and it would consume much of my time.

Dr. Genereux and Dr. Little decided that blood transfusions were needed to keep me alive. On Thursday, I would receive two blood transfusions. Waiting for the blood work to come back with results was long and a second seemed like a year. When I got the results, it was to our dismay. The blood transfusions had not worked. What was the reason why?

After further investigation, it was discovered that I was bleeding inside. I had a bleeding ulcer. Why not? Everything else was falling apart. What would make this day any different than any other I had in the past? It was serious and it needed to be taken care of right away. Another drug to take but this one would cause cancer, if I stayed on it long enough.

I must say that the ladies, who took care of me in the unit at St. Joseph's Hospital were wonderful. The care given by them was top of the line. Blood work, blood transfusions, doctors' appointments, waiting rooms, where was the time for me? What was my life? It had become a study and I was right in the middle of it. I was along for the ride and all I could do was go along with it.

MORE FRIENDS

I got in touch with my dear friend, Paul Cameron, who is a fellow on the same walk against AIDS. When I left P.E.I., Paul had been doing fine and he was not having any problems. When I went to see him upon my return, I was blown away to find he was not doing well. Recently, he had a piece of his brain removed and he had lost the total use of his left side. Wow! What the hell is happening to me and all of my friends? It was time for Paul to get his matters in order as well. It was good to see him. We always seem to have a little laugh, make some jokes about ourselves and draw strength from one another. It was becoming clear to both of us that our time here on earth was getting shorter and our days were numbered. This was becoming a little too much to handle and I was not sure how much more I wanted to handle. Why was everything around me falling apart? I am sure there are reasons but they aren't very clear to me at present.

The whole gang at the AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington County (A.C.G.W.C.) were wonderful to me. They were in full swing, with rides to my doctors' appointments and helping me in every way they could. The A.C.G.W.C. and my friends would become my pillars of strength and planted me on a firm foundation. I was a lucky man to have so much support around me.

When the doctors stopped my bleeding and gave me more blood transfusions, things became more stable. It was a bit of relief but I could see how fast I am going downhill. There were a lot of things I needed to complete and I wanted enough time to see them all completed. I started to work on my two memorial services. One would be held in Guelph, at the Unitarian Church and the other would be in O'Leary, P.E.I. Terry Jackman was a great help, by making sure my affairs were in order and that things would be done for me just the way I wanted them to be. It was hard for me to deal with all these matters because it made the end seem just a little closer. It needed to be done.

I wanted to rewrite my Will and leave some things to my dear friends. Paula would be taken care of, where her new home would be. I love that little dog so much. She will miss me, I know but she will be loved by her new family. Things were taking place and I needed to ensure that every detail would be in order. I had to decide whether I wanted to move to the east coast or stay in Guelph. At the point when I felt more ill, I would go home. I need to make these plans now. I planned to pack up most of my things to ship to the east coast and live on the farm near Guelph until I feel it is the right time for me to go home.

Christmas 1993 is coming and it would be good to spend it with my family. On the other hand, my dear friends were all going to be together and Garry Spears was coming home. I wish I could put all of my friends, family, doctors and the health care staff on an island, where I could have them all in one spot. This would be one of my dreams that I would hope could come true.

For now, I have settled in at the farm and it is wonderful. My friends can come here to see me and my doctors, friends and I will work together to make my last days on this wonderful earth a pain free experience. It is a zoo and I am the "keeper" of the zoo. This has been my story with you. It has helped me to have you join me on the roller coaster ride of fears, dreams and my walk with AIDS and MAC. My Hope and Dream is that this story will keep many people in their fight and walk with this powerful thing called AIDS.

THESE WERE MY DREAMS

Starting around September 1st 1993, I began to have some very special dreams. They were so peaceful and made me feel so at peace with myself that I recorded them to share with others.

On the night of September 4, 1993, I went to bed to sleep. I had not been sleeping very well the past few nights. While sleeping, I felt my body start to move. I opened my eyes and I saw my body leave my body. I was above my body and this white, clear, thick flowing pure substance covered all my organs that were sick. I saw a tunnel and a bright light at the end of it was very inviting but it was not my time yet. My body was ready for me to re-enter it and my work here on earth was not over so I had to come back.

I saw my close friends, David Roughfy and Tony that night. Their spirits were guiding me and the force was strong. David was at peace with himself and he wanted all of his close friends to know, especially Scott. Tony wants me to finish the green room and the green room door for the patrons at the A.C.G.W.C. (AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington County), so I went in and finished the job. The paint brush and the sea foam sponge felt guided in my hands. It was a great pleasure to see Tony and to get the room finished so he could be at home there. His only family was the A.C.G.W.C.

This dream was so strong and it was clear to me what I was to do: I was to stay awhile longer and write my book, learn from my dreams and teach about AIDS. When I got my weekly blood work done, my hemoglobin and white cell blood count had increased. It was not normal but there was a clear change and it was good. This dream proved just how the power of the mind can work. I am glad I had this experience.

It became very apparent that I was being taken care of and guided. At first, it felt a little strange and I was not sure about all of it. Would this be something that I would be able to tell people about? I thought that it didn't matter because this was happening to me and it was real.

Just last week, I had another dream. I felt the close presence of two people. They were in a lot of pain and I wasn't sure why I was there. We had connected and they both lived in Vancouver. They are close friends of Gloria Laird from A.C.G.W.C. In my dream, both these people had died of AIDS. I could feel their pain since they were very sick. They were not as strong as I, so I took on their pain for them.

There was such a strange, shooting burning pain in my legs and I was not sure I would be able to handle it. Pins and needles coursed through my feet and they felt numb. I surrounded myself with the vision of white light and got through the night. It felt good that these two people were pain free, at least for one night.

One of the men wants to pass over now because nothing is working for his pain and he cannot take it any longer. The other fellow has MAC (an opportunistic infection caused by two similar types of bacteria) just as I have. He is very close to me and we are so much alike. Gloria told me that he is a fighter and we have this in common too. He has lost the use of his legs but I feel strongly that he will regain short term use of them. I hope to hear that this will happen.

The will of dying is very strong. It has become very clear to me that when you find out that you're going to die sooner than you planned that you get a strong sense of survival. You start to look at life with a whole new perspective. Every day is important and it becomes very clear that you need to enjoy every minute in each day. Every breath is important. It would be great, if people would realize this before it is too late.

DEATH AND NEW LIFE

I don't understand how some people deal with death. Most people just do not deal with the whole matter at all. They don't think it will happen to them. When you talk to people about death and dying, they get very uncomfortable because they are scared of the unknown. It has been clear to me that you need to face the matter straight on in order to be at peace with yourself. It is only a matter of passing over to join the spirits, who guide you to pass over. It will be a wonderful experience.

I must admit that when I first found out I was dying, I was afraid. At first, I denied the fact that it would happen. There came a point, when denial stopped and I wanted to work on a peaceful path to pass over with the spirits. This path has been paved for me in my dreams. I just wish that people, who are in a similar state would be able to see how it works. When I gave myself over to the guidance of my spirit leaders, I no longer felt alone in this matter.

Even though I can see my body fail on a daily basis, I draw amazing strength to fight it with everything I can. Mind you, I guess being on \$1400.00 a month worth of drugs and painkillers also helps. Yet, it is amazing that I can take painkillers and still feel pain. It is amazing how much the human body can really take. Not for one second will I let the pain win. I am sure there will come a day, when I have had enough but for now, I plan to keep my chin up and be strong as long as I can.

When it is time for me to pass over, I will go peacefully knowing I fought the good fight with all my strength that my body and soul had. The message is clear and that is why I am still here to tell it. If you have support from your friends and loved ones, you can draw on their love, which makes you feel needed and wanted. People close to you encourage you to fight longer. There is power in numbers.

THE POWER OF THE MIND

I have developed some other methods to deal with my HIV. In my mind, I picture myself as a PAC Man. I was out to destroy all the bad cells. It was clear that this was helping me and I was trying all things possible. I could see the little PAC Man going after all the bad killer cells. In a way, it was important for me to let my mind take over and control my next moves. The power of the mind is strong and it is clear that it is in control and has the ability to heal the body and soothe the soul. This seems to be working for me and I was very interested in keeping it up.

In my dreams, it was in an apartment that things were working. My dream was clear. I dreamt that I was inside, looking my cells over. I could see some of my good cells hiding in these little pockets and a white substance covering them so that all the bad cells could not get to them and kill them. The dream was so amazing. In it, I could see and understand the picture that was set out for me. Sometimes, I cannot believe the things that have happened to me. I don't mind or fight it. I go with it.

It has been important to me to be totally attuned to my soul, body and spirits. It is a wonder how it all works but it is important that all things work in harmony. My apartment or body is in clear working order. This, I hope will help others to not give up. They must let their minds give them the strength and insight that they need.

I am pleased about the path made for me by the newly opened doors and I am excited to see where it will end. My journey has been an interesting one and it was good to have the power in what has been happening. I am happy to be a part of it.



GIVING THANKS

There are so many people I have to thank, who were major parts of my life giving me support, when I need it most. I need to let everyone know, who was there and where the support came from. It is important for people to know that they don't need to handle things on their own and that help is out there, if they seek it for their special needs.

My list will be long and needs to be noted:

My family, Dr. Anne-Marie Zajdlik, Dr. Maurice Genereux, the AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington County, all the people, who work at 21 Yarmouth Street, MDS Labs, St. Joseph's Hospital and the women, who work in the care unit. Tim at the drugstore, Gloria, Tim, Jan, Debbie A., Glen, Scott, Rick, Max, Chris, Brad, Jim, Bob, Vianne, Paula, Audrey, Debbie M., Garry S., Gary G., June, Jeff, Shane, the Cereny family, Robert, Richard, Pam, John, Peter K., Peter F., Mark, Trudy, Paul and Ann.

There are many more people who were a part of my walk and these are the people, who did their part to help me. It is important that people know that the support can be there and it is great to be able to draw on their strength. I can only say thank you with all my heart and that all of your spirits will be with me always. You all make life better and a loving place to live.

Thank you again, Cecil.

Cecil Cowan Wallace
May 15, 1961 - January 29, 1995
HOME AT LAST
ALWAYS IN OUR HEARTS

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WEB VERSION: THE KEEPER OF THE ZOO by Cecil Wallace