

In loving memory of my father, DAVID JAMES HALL (1920 – 1988)

And celebrating the ongoing life of Sharon Lee Hemus (1954 – sometime in the future)

In 1986, my wife, Leonie, and I started planning an around the world holiday for 1988, primarily spending most of the time in Europe and the UK. This was to be our first big holiday. At the time I was extremely interested in genealogy and we planned to visit a number of places in both England and Ireland where my ancestors had come from.



Just after EXPO in May 1988, as we were driving home from Sydney, Leonie commented that she thought my father looked a bit jaundice and not his usual self. Dad was 68 then and been retired for about 3 years. During his working life he rarely missed a days work and would walk to the end of the street about 500m, and catch a bus to Villawood and then another to Parramatta – the whole journey taking around an hour in each direction. He never complained and whenever you asked him, how he was, he always had a cheery way of saying “*I’m fine thanks son*”.

About 3 weeks before we were due to leave Australia, Mum phoned me to say that Dad had been undergoing some tests and had been diagnosed with inoperable bowel cancer. Mum & Dad hadn’t wanted to tell Leonie & I, however given the severity of the situation they decided to, but made us promise that if anything happened while we were away, we would still continue our holiday as we had planned for it for so long. I took some time off work and met with the Oncologist, who informed me that although Dad was gravely ill, he expected him to live another 6 months and we were only planning to be away for 3 months.

Around 1am, on the morning we were due to leave, Dad took a turn for the worse, so at 3am, we phoned our friends Sharon & Gary Hemus, who were planning to drive us to the airport, and asked if we could hit the road early, to visit the hospital in Sydney before going to the airport. By the time we arrived Dad had rallied & although looking weak, he knew we were there and about to embark on our journey of a lifetime. He wished us well, and as I hugged him and told him that I loved him, I wondered if he would be still with us when we returned.

Eleven days into the trip, he passed away. At the time, we were on a tour and had just reached Vienna – the only place outside of Australia, where I had a living relative – my cousin – Dad’s brother’s son. That morning we had also introduced ourselves to another couple on the tour and found out that he was a minister and has now become a lifetime friend. Needless to say, to this day, I cannot comprehend how all these things came to pass on the day they did.

Since then, every year on Dad’s birthday, I remember him, by sending a donation to the NSW Cancer Council. I know that it can’t help Dad, but it will help others, like our friend Sharon Hemus. I am an only child, but Sharon has been as much a sister to me as any real sister could have been.



In 1996, Sharon was diagnosed with breast cancer and unfortunately had to have a mastectomy. Sharon is one of these bubbly people who is (nearly) always happy and has a positive attitude to life even though some things can severely test her. Sharon recovered, but just when we thought everything was going well for her, she was given the news in November 1999, that she had a massive brain tumour the size of a golf ball, which needed to be operated on urgently. Given the size of the tumour and complexity of the operation it was touch and go for a while, but the skilful surgeons worked a miracle again for her and Sharon is still with us to this day.

So you see, I do believe that my donations have made a difference to someone’s life, and I personally have the living proof of it in Sharon. And I am sure there are many others like me, who know of someone who has been able to stand up and fight for their right to live and be happy. Unfortunately it is not always the case, but we cannot give up hope that one day, cancer like so many other diseases, will be beaten.

Stephen Hall
14th February 2002