

To my Friends and Family:

(to be read at memorial service)

Before I was diagnosed with cancer, I knew that I had a lot of friends. But I had no idea what this meant, or just exactly how privileged I was. In fact, as many of you know, I used to have a rather dim view of the world and of people in general. I did not particularly trust people. I did not see how loved I was. I frequently commented that I felt alone in the world, because I did. I thought that humanity was basically doomed and saw only the dark side of the human spirit. I also used to frequently think that if I were to die it wouldn't be that big of a loss -- for me or anyone else.

You have all been there for me through the worst parts of this disease. People flew from all over the country to care for me during chemotherapy treatments. People have given time, love, money, and comfort. Through it all, my friends and family encouraged me to remain positive, to remain hopeful, and gave me the strength to fight. While I was fighting, it was the thought of losing all of you that kept me going, that made me want to beat this disease so desperately. I came to realize that the meaning of life was not anything all that grand or spectacular. Life has meaning in the mundane activities that occur in the space of friendship.

I fought for my life because I couldn't imagine not having one more battle with Henry who, although he will proudly describe himself as an anti-intellectual, taught me a lot. It takes a special sort of friend to be able to fight like gladiators, and then smile and laugh and love each other even more.

I fought because I wanted to sit in Andrew's garden one more time, to see him working away with the peas and tomatoes, the sun glistening off of his back.

I wanted to eat food with Ben Ash, to see the special look of concentration he gets on his face when he's working in the kitchen.

I wanted to hear my Mom's voice on my voicemail, one more time. She says, "hi Chet, this is Mom," and there's always something happy in her tone, mixed strangely with something mournful and melancholy that haunts me every time I hear it precisely because it proves to me that I have never, ever been alone in this world.

I wanted to hear the sound of Carla's laughter which, during my absolute darkest moments, helped me laugh for no reason at all.

I fought because I wanted to see the determined way Sidney Walter walks; her stride makes her look 15 times taller than she is, and it makes small people like me feel protected.

I wanted to wake up one more morning and, while taking a shower, hear Tom Murray banging out some tune on his piano.

I fought to live because I wanted to have one more headlock from Brett or Andy, or one more forearm-shimmy from their father, Oliver.

I wanted to go fishing with my Dad and my brother, not because I like to fish, but because I like just being with them, in the calm, on the boat, in the midst of the sort of silence that says more about fathers and sons, and brothers, than any words can ever say.

I wanted to go on one more hike with Chad and Marie.

I wanted to go to just one more museum with Christopher Pierce which is like cramming an entire art history course into an intense, mind-boggling hour. I never liked Whistler until I went to the Gardner museum with Chris, in Boston.

I wanted to have one more drink and one more laugh with Michael and Ron.

I wanted to hear Steve Seidman lecture just one, last time, to feel that unique way he can make my brain catch on fire, so stimulated I can't even take notes.

And I wanted to see Jake and Ben grow up.

It was the simple little interactions I had with all of you that made me keep fighting, struggling, and which made me view cancer as an enemy that was threatening what was most precious to me.

I hate cancer, and I know you do, too. It stole my life from me. It stole you from me. I wish I could have beaten it. But, cancer also revealed to me just how meaningful my life was. It helped me to see all of you for the wonderful people you are, and to see how much I was loved. I never would have been able to see all of that without cancer, so in an odd way, I am thankful for it.

One of my favorite readings comes from Nietzsche in *The Gay Sciences*. It's called "The Greatest Weight" and it goes like this:

"What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence -- even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust.'

Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: 'You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.' If this

thought gained possession of you. it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, 'Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?' would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to crave nothing more fervently than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?"

What you should all know, and what I hope will somehow become of some comfort to you, is that, if I were to have my life to do over again, I would not change a single thing. Not only would I never give up the experiences I had with each of you, but I also would not live without cancer, because as much as I despise it for what it has stolen from me, I am thankful to it for what it revealed to me.

I will miss all of you very much.

Love, Chet