



My kids and I will always draw strength from the care and comfort their mom experienced in her last days.

May 21, 2021

My wife Lori was only 44 when she died last fall, leaving me and our two children devastated. Lori and I met at teachers' college in New Brunswick and quickly knew that we wanted to spend our lives together. We had no idea that this would only mean about 22 years.

Lori was the most amazing person I ever knew.

Lori was a passionate educator and brought such enthusiasm and energy to her classroom. Throughout her career, she taught grades 3 and 4 and over the last few years, special education. Lori was the type of teacher who brought out curiosity in others, including me. She helped me to be a better teacher; not only with my own grade 8 students, but also with our children: Grant, 14 and Emily, 16.

Lori was diagnosed with cervical cancer in September 2016 following a routine checkup. She was referred to Sunnybrook Hospital where her doctors recommended a grueling 28 rounds of radiation followed by 24 rounds of chemotherapy and 4 rounds of brachytherapy. **They were confident that this intense treatment would rid her of the cancer cells so that she wouldn't need to worry about this ever again.** Lori attacked treatment with the same passion and energy she'd always had. After a full day of painful treatment, she'd be up at the crack of dawn to take Grant to hockey practice or Emily to riding lessons. **Family was everything to Lori. Our family of four banded together to support Lori through her tough treatment and we were ecstatic when she received a clean bill of health in November 2017.**

Although the doctors said she was cancer-free, Lori continued to experience pain. Her doctors kept telling her that it was residual from her brachytherapy treatments, but Lori pushed for additional tests. **She knew that something wasn't right.** In December 2017, Lori underwent a laparoscopic procedure that showed what she knew all along – the cancer had spread to her major organs. The doctors told us that additional treatment would only mean added time and that her condition was no longer curable.

Throughout all of her treatment, Lori had the uncanny ability to connect with people. **She formed a strong bond with a group of women in a local cancer support group. They affectionately called themselves 'The Tribe' and each were dubbed 'Warrior Princesses'.** The women were sources of strength for one another as their different journeys evolved. It was tough for all the women, but through it all Lori had a way of bringing a sense of humour and positivity, which helped these women. She was always helping others before herself.

...please turn over

Our family motto is: We can do hard things.

Following her final prognosis, Lori continued to live her life to the fullest. She made memories with our kids at every possible opportunity. I have thousands of photos to look back on because Lori always seemed to have the camera in her hand – I'm so thankful for that now.

For the following year, Lori continued to create memories at every turn as she managed her health.

Things seemed to be going okay until March 2020 when she developed multiple infections and her kidneys started to fail. It was at that time that we started to talk about hospice.

The notion of hospice had never crossed our minds. Lori had originally said that she wanted to be at home for her end-of-life, but being the educator that she was, she did some research and learned about the many benefits that hospice could offer our family. **Lori heard about Margaret Bahen Hospice from her support group and we learned about their bright, warm and welcoming environment.** It's not the dark and dreary place we thought a hospice would be. We saw that this is a place where we would be treated like family.

We moved in on a Monday in August. Once she was settled into her room, Lori looked at me and said ***"This is it. This is the place where I feel comfortable and in my gut; I know that this is the right place for us"***. She was right. They made us feel at 'home'. On our second night, the staff hosted an ice cream party and came around to make sure Grant and Emily got their sundaes. Everything from the freshly baked goods from the kitchen to the warm blankets from the dryer to the beautiful outdoor gardens; made us feel at ease during one of the most difficult times of our lives.

***As hard as it is to watch your wife slipping away from you,
I took comfort in knowing that she was never alone.***

The staff at Margaret Bahen Hospice made us feel like family and knew just how to make a difficult situation more comfortable for our kids, whether it meant encouraging us to bring our dog for a visit or having a staff member sit with Lori while I took a shower. Nothing was ever a bother. **The staff made us feel 'at home' and through their kindness showed us that good memories can be made, even during end-of-life care.**

Today, Grant, Emily and I do our best to take care of each other. They have Lori's caring and curious personality. I see so much of her in them already and I'm thankful for that.

As hard as it is to talk about Lori's death, which is still so fresh in my heart, I'm sharing our story with you because I know that Lori would want to continue helping others. I hope you will consider a gift, of any amount you are able, in support of Margaret Bahen Hospice to ensure this wonderful place is there for everyone who needs it.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Banfield'. The signature is stylized with long, sweeping lines.

Paul Banfield

P.S. Lori would be over the moon if she knew that her story made an impact on the Hospice she loved so much. Thank you for your generosity today.