

At 30, a father copes with terminal cancer

‘I have to live with what I’ve got’



Peter Levesque, who has been battling cancer for more than two years, has been told patients in his situation have four to nine months live. He plans to spend the time he has left with his wife, Bridget, and their nine-month-old son Quentin.

By Jack Chang, Whig-Standard Staff Writer

It’s unlikely that Peter Levesque will live to see his nine-month-old son Quentin grow up.

He won’t be around to read him bedtime stories. Or to see him tie his first shoelace, put on a tie, or shave for the first time.

Levesque is hoping for the best, but deep down he knows his terminal lung cancer will prevent him from doing all those little things that a father does with his son.

So he has hatched a plan: He’s going to videotape himself doing all those things. One day -long after he’s gone - his wife Bridget can play back those tapes for Quentin and the boy will be able to learn from his daddy.

Life’s not fair.

Levesque is only 30 years old and he has been a health nut all his life.

“I don’t smoke. I don’t drink,” he said, shaking his head and trying to fight back tears.

He has watched his diet since he witnessed his mother die of a massive heart attack.

He was only 10 years old then.

“I had 15 years of good eating and clean living. I made sure that everything was done properly. I trained my butt off to make sure I was healthy. And nobody in my family has had cancer.”

His life began to unravel in September 2000, when thought he was fighting a bad cold.

“Then I had pins and needles in my body and I went to the emergency. They did an X-ray and found I had a [tumour] the size of a baseball in my left lung. That came as a shock.”

In less than two months, doctors removed half of his lung.

“When they did the operation, they thought they removed everything. Then in September 2002, we found it [the cancer] had spread to both lungs.”

His prognosis isn't encouraging. Patients in his situation have four to nine months to live. Only three per cent of them live for another five years.

“I cried for five minutes the first time [after learning about the terminal illness]. Maybe my mother wants me to be with her again, I don't know”.

He has since given up on chemotherapy.

“We decided that chemotherapy was not adding to the quality of life said Bridget. “He was physically ill for a week and a half after one treatment.”

After battling cancer for more than two years, Levesque slimmed down a bit. But has a body that would make others envious.

He has arms that almost as big as some people's legs.

He's slightly over five-feet and weighs 197 pounds, ...weighed 215 before he got sick.

“I'm a bodybuilder, a trainer,” he said

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He was born in Lowe, Que., north of Hull, and moved to this area a dozen years ago. He spent five years at the Royal Military College of Canada as a trainer and a security person. He is currently on sick leave.

Since the first operation, he has been trying to start up a small business to clean and maintain parking lots.

“I thought I would have five years and get a business established so that when I’m gone, my family would have a business.”

He’s still trying to get the business going. He hopes time isn’t running out. That’s tough for a self-proclaimed workaholic.

These days, he’s busy signing papers —just in case.

“He’s signing the power-of-attorney for his health care, and the joint account so that it won’t be tied up in red-tape for a long time,” his wife said.

It’s difficult for Levesque not to think about the disease that’s killing him.

“I can get mad, it’s there. I can get upset, it’s there. I have to live with what I’ve got. I have a system.”

He will cheer up tomorrow when he and his family fly to the Bahamas for a trip of a lifetime. The one-week trip will be courtesy of the Dreams to Memories, a wish-granting foundation for terminally-ill young parents based in Fort Erie.

“We raise money through service clubs, churches and in memoriam donations,” said Ann Richardson, a director with the group. “We hope that people in Kingston will help. Any donations for the trip will be appreciated,” Richardson said.

The address is: Dreams to Memories, P O. Box 313, Fort Erie, Ont., L2A 5N1, or e-mail: wishes@dreams2memories.org.

Richardson said that she learned about Levesque’s case through the Kingston Regional Cancer Centre.

Levesque said that he would like to visit a resort in Nassau and take a ride on a glass-enclosed waterslide that plunges underwater where he’ll be able to see sharks swimming all around him.

And maybe he’ll go fishing.

“Maybe I’ll catch something bigger and stronger than me.”

Bridget Levesque said her husband has been putting off doing the videotapes for Quentin, but will do it after this trip.

“Doing these things makes it look like things are getting closer to the ending. It’s overwhelming,” she said.