

# One Year To Live?

## *A Nobody's guide to surviving Cancer*

**By Patch Rose**

*I'm a nobody. I'm not a famous personality or a world-class athlete. I have no money, no influence and no hair. In short, I'm just like you.*

*Yet I am the new face of Cancer. I've looked the beast in the eye, and I'm here to tell you what I saw. Walk with me through the strange and scary desert called survival.*

### **AT HEAVENS DOOR**

In my first meeting with my neurologist in Phoenix, I had lots of questions, like will you validate my parking, and he answered all of them except one. How will I die?

The day after my first surgery he came to see me in my room. And I asked him again.

He said the question troubled him because it suggested I was thinking about dying instead of living.

You'd think having just come through a 7 hour brain surgery would suggest to most that I want to live. That's when I told him I would be one of his miracle patients. One that he would have in front of the Neurology class of 2025, who then would all poke me with their pins, and ask me who the governor is. I said he'd have to give me an answer. I'm the type of guy who wants everything in order. I'd hate to lock into a 4 year cell phone plan the month before I die.

Then he told me you usually die from something else – for example the tumor would reach the part of the brain that controls the heart and you would die from a heart attack.

Then he went back to what I was facing in my recovery from surgery. But the way he answered the question suggested there was more to the story. Inquiring minds want to know, while they can, the answers to their questions, so I searched the internet and it took almost a year before I finally found an article from a different Neuro-surgeon. He said dying from this disease is not much different from dying of Alzheimers and paralysis at the same time.

In other words, you are trapped in your body with no means of communication and no memories. No wonder Dr. Shapiro didn't want to tell me.

You can imagine when I read that the chills that ran through me. Until I realized that this doctor had described a newborn baby. No memories, no form of verbal communication, and no idea of how to use his body.

Well, I figured I had already gone through that experience, and rather than being scary it was one of the most placid times of my life. No bill collectors.

Later, I read the auto-biography of Tug McGraw, the baseball player and father of country music star Tim McGraw, and the book confirmed my understanding because Tug's life ended as it began. Surrounded by people who loved him, who cared for him, and celebrated every second he was awake.

There's another person who appears to be going through this stage. His name is David Welch. He has a website [www.38lemon.com](http://www.38lemon.com). He was diagnosed a year before me.

David has been an inspiration the way he shares everything from his first day as a cancer survivor to his most recent diagnosis. He has battled 4 tumors and has tried in so many different ways to beat this disease. But it looks like the disease is winning.

For sometime now his family has been updating his site for him. It seems he has entered the final stage, he's sleeping most of the day, and when he's up he does eat and interact with his family as best he can.

I know his family will make the most of this time with David, because at this point it is all about love. This is no longer about doctors, bills, tumors, the economy, or fights that happened a decade ago. This is just about love.

His parents get their baby boy again. All his loved ones get to fill his days, how ever many he has left, with love.

This will be all he brings to his new life, and all he will need

I know this is where I am headed too. I still want to be the miracle patient here after two decades. But it's good to know how I will die. When I knock on heavens door I'll have nothing in my hands but love.

*In November 2005, Herald reporter and freelance writer Patch Rose was diagnosed with a GBM brain tumor. Statistically, GBM patients live about one year after diagnosis. So far, Patch has beaten the odds, and a new recurrence of his cancer. Patch is in his second "one year to live."*

*Patch lives in Truth or Consequences alongside his wife, cats and Chihuahuas. Together, they make half a dozen Roses, plus one for luck.*

*This column is based on Patch's true-life story.*

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**Patch and Cookie, Christmas, 2008**

**Courtesy: Carlos Padilla**

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