

To the Undiscovered Country

To the Undiscovered Country

Lina's "CaringBridge" entries, 2022 – 2024

Lina Foltz

Edited, with commentaries by Rand Careaga

*"...be able to recognize the good in the bad, the bad in the worst, and so grow gently old down all the unchanging days,
and die one day like any other day, only shorter."*

—Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*

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The CaringBridge site permits contributors to assign “titles” to their entries, in the absence of which these default to the date posted. More often than not, Lina didn’t bother with a title, whereas in my own occasional interpolations I invariably did. In the interests of editorial consistency I have devised titles for her entries, consistent with their content, wherever she has not provided one. The meat of this book, the accounts originally posted by us online (and beginning on page 7), are here reproduced employing the typographical convention of a distinctive font:

The CaringBridge material looks like this.

All other content, as in the sidebars and in the prefatory remarks (on the page opposite, for example), represent material composed in the year following Lina’s death.

preface: some backstories

SHE HAD NO USE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA. Facebook was a closed book to her; she expended no time on TikTok nor wit on Twitter; took no interest in Pinterest; Instagram and Snapchat knew her not. Owing to professional reasons she was obliged to acquire an elementary competence in “Zoom” for the purpose of teleconferences, and beginning with the 2020 pandemic “lockdown” Lina Foltz began to participate in Sunday services at Oakland’s College Avenue Presbyterian Church (“CAPC” hereafter), at which she’d long been a parishioner, via video linkup. The congregation there is smallish but tight-knit, and following my wife’s diagnosis of a dire ailment in mid-2022, word spread as rapidly – well, as rapidly as the cancer itself once the disease began to unfold.

The first ten days of July found her confined to a hospital bed, and during that time a vast backlog of text messages, emails and voice-mails filled up her various inboxes. At this, and better to field such a deluge of well-intentioned concern, she at last overcame her reluctance (for Lina was ever of a pragmatic if not invariably practical turn of mind) and established a regular online presence at “CaringBridge,” a site designed for patients to keep family and friends apprised as to developments. Her entries, amounting to an electronic diary of the last twenty-eight months of her life, make up the bulk of this volume. She frequently included photographs – of herself, of our meals, of our dog, of her beloved (and as I write, shamefully neglected) garden – and I have included many, perhaps most of these, along with my own commentaries in occasional “sidebars” at the margins.

Lina was fond of relating that she and I had first met on her sixteenth birthday in 1969. This occurred in “Porter Ranch,” then a newish,



*Above: Enchanted not-yet couple at sixteen.
Below: Denver, 2005, a few months before we wed.*





September 2005: Blushing bride gets hitched to an older guy.



Ca. 1970: Auto shop be damned, she'll do her own maintenance.

relatively tony trio of subdivisions (“Landmark,” “Cherry Hill” and “Porter Ridge”) at the northern edge of the San Fernando Valley. I was visiting my high school chum Nick who, catching sight of her sitting in front of her home that afternoon, impulsively trotted us across the street to effect my introduction to “Linda,” as she was then known. Sixteen myself, a susceptible age, I was struck by her slightly exotic good looks. We were to see a fair amount of one another that summer as part of the same teenage circle, but apart from a single episode of light snogging under what I think any fair-minded person would regard as special circumstances, it was clear to me that mine was a doomed infatuation. Join the line: as another heartsick would-be swain confessed to her thirty years later, “I knew you only went out with older guys.” “I know what you mean,” I told him. “I had to become an older guy myself before she ever gave me a second look.” Lina’s then-boyfriends tended to be men in their twenties, living on their own, as one did in that era. As she once put it to me, “A 25 year-old has his own place, his own car, he’s got a job, discretionary income, can get a girl into nightclubs, show her a good time... and I was supposed to settle for a high school senior why, exactly?” Ever the pragmatist indeed.

As the reader may begin to imagine from this account, Lina was not at that time a sedulous student, and by her account cut classes as frequently as she attended them. She liked to tell the story of how during pre-registration one semester she had a male friend sign her up as “L. Foltz,” for auto shop, only to be peremptorily expelled by the irate instructor on the first day of class. In those days, *meine Kinder*, a rigid gender bar was in effect: girls did not take shop; boys did not take home economics. There was no legal basis for this, and Lina, full of beans from her class in constitutional law, among the few in which she maintained fairly faithful attendance, was disposed to challenge this. Her old man, who happened to be on the high school’s faculty (also a shop teacher) was having none of it, and

threatened his daughter with the confiscation of her car should she make trouble for him in the faculty lounge. Accordingly, although Lina never did receive formal instruction in these matters, she set about on her own to acquire a competence in the techniques and impedimenta of automobile maintenance. She and Nick visited me during my freshman year in college, she driving her “Morris Minor,” one of *two* she owned during that period. They were never both in operating condition at any given time, for she would keep one running with parts taken from the other. Half a decade later, after rolling her mid-sixties Opel Kadett in the Yukon, she drove the car sans windshield – crouching behind the steering wheel, because the roof was now several inches lower than it had been prior to the accident – to a friend’s spread outside Kenai, Alaska, where the wreck remains out in the bush to this day. While there, she removed the engine, crated it up, and flew back from Anchorage to Los Angeles *with the engine as checked baggage*. Don’t try this at home, kids.

Upon graduation from high school with, taking into account all those cut classes, only slightly better than mediocre marks, Lina enrolled in the city’s public “West Valley Occupational Center,” where she mastered the skills to qualify herself as a grocery clerk, and shortly found gainful employment at the “Lucky” supermarket chain. During those years she also took occasional waitressing gigs, as she had earlier done (using her elder sister’s purloined ID) as an underage teen, and also found time to attend, in desultory fashion, “San Fernando Valley State College,” although she was not to complete her degree in music there for almost another two decades, by which time the school had assumed the rather grandiloquent handle of “California State University, Northridge.” She did reflect, afterward, that “college was the first time I ever learned how to *study*,” which was obviously going to stand her in good stead by the time she found herself preparing to take the state bar exam in 1993.



1975: Striking a provocative “Valley Girl” pose with her doomed Opel Kadett, fated never to return from its trip to the 49th state.



Freshly minted J.D., May 1993



Rockin' in the free world: Promo shots for two of Lina's touring bands, "On Hold" and "Hot Shots" (dig the eighties haircuts!) and for Los Angeles-based "E-Ticket," in which she played even after she was admitted to the California State Bar.

The life of a grocery checkerette proved, while adequately remunerative, short on adventure, and in the early eighties Lina went "on the road" as an itinerant musician, singing and playing guitar in a number of rock & roll "cover bands," the last two of which she formed and managed herself. It was during this period that she shortened her first name, legally formalizing this after a decade. The touring life took her to hotels, nightclubs, roadhouses and bars the length and breadth of the land, and carried with it an abundance of adventure and anecdote, but by the end of the decade she began to yearn for a less peripatetic life, and to this end prepared to return to Southern California, where she completed her degree and then, to the surprise of her friends, went on to enroll at the Southwestern University School of Law in Los Angeles from which, as she was later to boast, "I graduated in the top hundred percent of my class." Upon learning of this decision, Nick's mother was solicitously concerned. "Dear, you'll be *forty* by the time you finish." At this Lina shrugged. "I'm going to be forty anyway. Might as well be forty with a J.D." She was eventually to make something of a name for herself in a rather specialized corner of the law, and for an informed account of her career I refer the reader to a professional appreciation (page 189) by Jean Murrell Adams, a colleague with whom she worked closely for years.

I will close by reminding the lay reader, and particularly those who did not know this side of Lina, that her "core audience" throughout the period she was on CaringBridge consisted of her friends at CAPC, and the tone and themes of her writing might accordingly make her seem to be more of a (forgive me here, CAPC folks) god-botherer than she was wont to come off in other contexts. But her faith and the fellowship she cherished with her co-religionists brought her enormous comfort, and served greatly to sustain her throughout the long ordeal.

—Rand Careaga

2022: dawn of the dread

LINA HAD BEEN FEELING MILDLY OUT OF SORTS for a few months. Nothing too concerning: a bit of bloating, occasional nausea, some digestive irregularities. Still, as these mild symptoms persisted, she consulted our “health care provider,” Kaiser Northern California. I had found Kaiser, which first enrolled me at the end of 1977, a satisfactory HMO up until, earlier in the present century, they appear to have filled their board of directors with Enron alumni, and to have adjusted their business model accordingly (nobody ever said late-stage capitalism would be pretty). Kaiser was disposed to blow off Lina’s concerns. “It’s probably a urinary tract infection. Here, try these antibiotics.” When, by spring, she began to pester them for an abdominal scan, the response was “Sure thing. We have an opening three months from now. Late August work for you?”

At this point Lina enlisted the assistance of her “primary care physician,” Dr. Tse, who greased the skids and arranged for a series of scans toward the end of June. These being conducted, we awaited the results without undue concern, imagining them to be on the order of “Nothing to see here,” or “Meh, slight problem, here’s how we’ll fix it.” What we were not expecting, conveyed early one morning in a text message, was “advanced metastatic peritoneal carcinomatosis, with a poor prognosis.”

You could have knocked us over with a catheter. We pondered this in silence for a few moments. “Well,” Lina presently observed, “you’ve always said there’s no one like me. Looks like there isn’t going to be.”

Her condition, with tumors sprouting in the lining of the abdomen, was about as unpropitious as the message sounded, the consequence of undetected/untreated cancer having migrated from its point of



A last promo shot, for E-Ticket.

origin (generally gynecological or intestinal) and establishing fortified redoubts in preparation for a general offensive. The average interval of survival post-diagnosis is about half a year, although this figure is dragged down by the steep decline characteristic of those patients whose disease originated in the gut rather than in the ladyparts.

Shortly after the diagnosis her disease announced itself dramatically, and Lina was to spend much of the first part of July hospitalized as she experienced painful and life-threatening accumulations of fluid (“ascites” is the medical term of art) in her abdomen.

Our early consultations with the oncologist assigned to us by Kaiser did not occasion much hope. Her attitude struck us as “Frankly, the sooner you’re off my caseload, the more time I’ll have to devote to patients with an actual chance of surviving.” This is probably unjust to the physician, but we were both of us left with the impression of dismissiveness. I make no judgment regarding her competence as a clinician, but the whole “bedside manner” thing could use some work.

Lina’s temperament and her training neither of them disposed her to take this death sentence meekly. She set about, within the precincts of legitimate oncology, looking for a “second opinion” (in her position I would likely have folded up, attempted to order my affairs, and landed on the wrong side of the sod by the end of the year). Following some research, she concluded that either Stanford Medical Center in nearby Palo Alto or Cedars-Sinai in distant Los Angeles offered the best prospects for aggressive treatment as opposed to Kaiser’s “lie back and think of England” approach. Stanford tended to be dilatory in its communications; Cedars brisker. And so, in July, we headed to the Souhland...

July 13, 2022 ☞ *Raising the curtain* ☞ Lina Foltz:

Hello Friends & loved ones.

This is my site for trying to keep everyone informed about my progress & circumstances.

I received a recent diagnosis of cancer, peritoneal carcinomatosis. It is fairly rare, aggressive & stubborn. I have had the biopsy & various tests, but have not yet consulted w/ an oncologist. That should happen this coming Monday. I am consulting w/ both Kaiser & Cedars-Sinai doctor then. I will be weighing the best course in consult w/Rand and in prayer for discernment.

I am so grateful for the outpouring of love from you. But, I can't keep in touch right now. I will post when I know more. Or, Rand may enter updates. I love you and thank you for your prayers and love.

July 16, 2022 ☞ *Off to see the wizards* ☞ Rand Careaga:

Thanks to all who have weighed in. I hope that the registration process was not too arduous.

We have found Kaiser, following its initial response to the crisis, to have been off-puttingly reticent as to how we might proceed from here, and Lina has accordingly sought outside consultation. To this end we are shortly off to see the specialists at Cedars-Sinai in Southern California in the hope that they will be more forthcoming. We venture to hope that they will have some light – for choice a bright one – to throw upon her prognosis.

July 18, 2022 ☞ *First consultations* ☞ Lina:

We're settled in in L.A. Thank you all for the outpouring of love, prayers & comments.

I consult today for the first time w/ doctors. Won't have the proposals, if any until around 5:00 pm. I or Rand will update after the consults.

Best,
Lina



May 2022: Looking in on the premises of vacationing friends, harvesting the mail and watering their plants. Probably the last photo taken of Lina before her diagnosis six weeks later.

Overture: Summer 2022

Hard upon receipt of her unpropitious scan results at the end of June, Lina's cancer announced itself dramatically with a fluid buildup in her abdomen – “ascites,” we learned, is the medical term – that saw her hospitalized in Oakland for several days. The first crisis overcome, or at least ameliorated, we spoke to a Kaiser oncologist who, in effect, shrugged and told us (here I quote) “there are no good outcomes here.” Terms such as “palliative care” and “hospice” were bruited about, way too early in Lina's estimation. She set about looking for alternatives, and shortly resolved to check out Cedars-Sinai in Southern California. Here, in mid-July 2022, she commences what will prove a regular series of entries on CaringBridge.

“Young Doctor Ponec”

We were both favorably impressed by the oncologist at the Cedars-Sinai offices on Ventura Boulevard in Tarzana, about twenty minutes from our friends’ Northridge condominium, even though “Young Doctor Ponec,” as I came to refer to him, looked barely old enough to shave, much less vote or drink. His manner was forthright – the odds were long, he told us frankly – without being dismissive, and his explanation of the course of treatment was lucid. Interestingly, he was not convinced that hyperthermic therapy, “HIPEC,” was necessarily the magic bullet we required: “It’s gone in and out of medical fashion,” he observed. “Lately it’s out.”

Nevertheless, he did not, unlike his opposite number in Oakland (who all but sneered at the procedure as fringe medicine, which would have come as news to the folks at the Mayo Clinic), rule it out. Hold that thought.

July 19, 2022 *We commit* Lina:

We consulted with Kaiser’s Gyn-Oncologist & Cedar-Sinai’s and have decided to get care at Cedars. This involves many extra preparations, but we can do that.

My care will start with several weeks of chemo therapy, on Monday, and then an evaluation about the surgery. I expect six sessions spaced 3 weeks apart. Many test in-between are also on tap, so to speak. Thank you for the comments. It is great to hear your thoughts. I’m enjoying quiet & working on my legs which got quite weak in the past month. Shocking. The 3 levels of stairs here at our place is helping.

Best.

Lina

July 20, 2022 *Moving fast* Lina:

Things have been moving fast here. There was a cancellation, so I’m getting the port tomorrow for administration of my chemo, in time for the first dose. Praise.

Monday I get the first infusion. Then, should be two weeks of feeling better. Then round 2 & so on. I’m getting stronger on the stairs. Feel like I have legs again.

My brother is here in town for work. So, he stopped by. He’s a good brother.

Thanks for the comments and love. I will respond when I can. Love to all.

Lina

July 21, 2022 *Ported and ready* Lina:

Well I’m ported and ready to use the port for the chemo infusion & blood draws, etc. No IV’s now. Amazingly lucky to get an appointment today, so I will not need to have the first round of chemo by IV. The surgeon was an artist & the staff angels. Lucky me. No showers for three days. Small price to pay.

The surgery is done under sedation, not a general. So the recovery is very short.

Supplemental furniture comes tomorrow, couch & extra bed in case I need to sleep alone for a few days or need family to come stay w/ me. We hope to be home in the interim, like Sunday in 10 days, to take care of general stuff & bring more stuff for supplementing our spartan digs. Very comfortable here. Thanks to Tanya & Tom. I'm so blessed.

I will be need to stay away from others after chemo Monday. Looks like 6 months of Zoom. Hope you all are enjoying the summer weather. It's hot here.

Love,
Lina

July 22, 2022 ❧ *Gearing up for summer* ❧ **Lina:**

Today Cort delivered supplemental furniture, sofa, recliner & extra bed. We are almost all set up here for the three months of chemo. I will have free weeks in between, but am inclined to stay put. I'm thinking of all the amazing things that have fallen into place to make such progress in only three weeks since my diagnosis. Many of you share my thoughts that God is in it. In any case such blessings that make me grateful. It's all about the people we share our lives with. Best to you all.

Lina

July 23, 2022 ❧ *Settled in* ❧ **Lina:**

Dearest Friends & Family,

So we're settled in now & ready to begin chemo on Monday. We're ready & hopeful.

Furnishings and the condo are very comfortable for us, and Tanya & Tom, our childhood friend's daughter & husband, have made us very comfortable. I will try to attach a few photos.

We are eating well & I'm getting stronger each day, due to our built-in stairmaster gym. I'm in good spirits & feeling strong.

Thank you all for your caring love, prayers & support.

Thinking of you,
Lina

Base Camp Northridge

Kind friends (Tanya Sirkin, the daughter of the man who introduced me to Lina – “Linda” as was – on her sixteenth birthday in 1969, and Tom, her freshly-minted husband) made available her vacant condominium in Northridge as our base of operations in the San Fernando Valley. The couple offered it to us gratis, but we insisted upon a rental arrangement, albeit at a cheerfully accepted below-market rate.

The configuration of the place, on three levels – the “living room” at the front, the kitchen/dining area half a flight up at the rear; the two bedrooms a full flight up on the entire top floor – all this was a little hard on poor Ravi, our increasingly frail and geriatric German Shepherd/Husky mix, but he was a trouper throughout the months of our intermittent tenure.



Ravi, being a good sport about all this.



The layout of the condo following delivery of the rental furniture. The kitchen and dining area are half a flight up; the bedrooms a full flight on the upmost level. Ravi required careful guidance and support traversing up and down the steps.

July 24, 2022 ☺ *Bring out your vibes* ☺ Rand:

Lina is presently enjoying her first shower since the installation of her "port," and is anticipating ("looking forward to" would perhaps be putting it a little strongly) her first round of chemo in Tarzana beginning tomorrow morning. We do indeed regard favorably whatever measures modern medicine can bring to bear to stomp upon the insubordinate cells presently afflicting her. Your good vibes, secular and non, are welcome.

July 25, 2022 ☺ *First infusion* ☺ Lina:

So I had my first chemo infusion today. It was a long process because I received 2 chemo drugs, a biological called Avastat (I think) which is designed to prolong remission, and an assortment of other things. The port is amazing. No pain. I feel good tonight and the process was not painful.

After 2-3 sessions, 3 weeks apart, I will have arthroscopic [?? -Ed] surgery to remove tumors & other parts. Then more chemo.

I missed being at church on Sunday. I joined but had to go due to exigent circumstances, dog duties.

Love to each one of you and thank you again for your love and caring.

July 26, 2022 ☺ *A world of miracles* ☺ Lina:

Hi,

Well it's the first day post-chemo, which often is a hard day. However, I have not had nausea yet & I feel pretty good. Tired, but able to walk around & climb the stairs.

Rand & I did necessary shopping after parking Ravi with our long-time friend, Nick, because Ravi has such anxiety being alone in a strange place & it took so long, we wanted to ensure his access to outside. It took nearly three hours. But, I was able to walk in the store briefly. Even a few days ago, I had to ride the handicapped scooter. So, I'm feeling surprisingly stronger. Still the chemo is doing its work & there likely will be some downturn. The Holy Spirit, as Judy Gough reminds me, is great solace.

Robert & Rebecca are tending house plants at home. Yohanas, a neighbor, is moving my van on street cleaning day. Tom is watering my garden. I'm surrounded by angels. I'm so fortunate and grateful.

So, here is today's picture. You can see coming over my collar bone on the right side is the tube that runs from the port below, a small bump at the edge of my shirt, to my aorta. This is the device that avoids the need for any IV during chemo administration or related blood draws. Amazing. No pain when they access it and it will be used for the duration of treatment. We live in a world of miracles.

I hope you are all well & remembering the importance of conveying your love each day to those who you care about. Say it, share it.

Best,
Lina

July 27, 2022 ❧ *So far, so good* ❧ Lina:

Second day post-chemo & I still feel pretty good. No nausea, swelling, etc. They say the second round usually is the harder one. So, I'm grateful that this is going easily. We're eating well. I have a good appetite. So far, so good.

Lina

July 29, 2022 ❧ *Turning red* ❧ Lina:

Hi,

Nothing to report here. I'm just counting down the days until the next chemo on August 15. I have some joint pain, but nausea is ameliorated by the medication I have. We're in good spirits. Ravi and I are getting our staircase exercise. Rand too, actually, but Ravi and Rand have their walks. I must stay out of the sun. I'm quite photo-sensitive. I turned red just walking from the car into the grocery store the first day.

I trust you are all well. We will be traveling again on Sunday, but I may be able to join Zoom Church from the road. If not, I hold you all in my thoughts and prayers.

My brothers and sister have been helpful. My brothers have the engineering aptitude and my sister and her daughter have all the details



At this point in the treatment regimen, her hair loss has not yet begun, and Lina looks nothing like as gaunt as she later became.

of our family history for the genetic counseling meeting I had to try to identify a genetic cause of the cancer, or not. Love to all.

Best,
Lina

July 29, 2022 ☞ Administrative note ☞ Rand:

Rand here: Lina's feeling a bit peaked this morning as Monday's cocktail of wonder drugs increasingly kicks in. She's asked me to mention that "Caring Bridge" is the easiest communications channel for her to monitor – she looks in here oftener than she does on her email account, and the signal-to-noise ratio is of course much more favorable in this venue, given its exclusive clientele.

As a general note, if for some reason you do happen to send her an email, she asks – out of a prudent sufficiency of caution – that you do not phrase your communiqué "generically." That is to say, a message reading "Hi, this is Brad [or Debbie, or Phil]. Haven't heard from you lately – please get back to me" does not provide the kind of personal context that would persuade the recipient that it is indeed Brad come calling, and not some ill-intentioned stranger rattling her electronic doorknob under false colors. Thanks for your understanding.

July 31, 2022 ☞ On doggie digestion ("Yikes!") ☞ Lina:

We're headed home today for about a week. Looking forward to reasonable daily temperatures and being home generally. We've accomplished a great deal in our two weeks here in "The Valley." It is interesting to be in our home town with so much changed, but many things still here.

Ravi has mostly recovered from his panic day early in the trip, when he chewed up and ate pieces of his collar, which I had taken off him to make him comfortable. We were shopping for necessities for a couple hours. I did not realize he would be quite that anxious. We had to leave him locked in the upstairs bedroom, where we sleep & he has a pillow, because we did not have dog barriers yet to keep him from falling down the stairs. Fortunately, he did not die because of a blockage & we consider ourselves fortunate. He has eliminated large pieces & we think they are all out because his digestion has returned to normal. Yikes!



Bits of Ravi's collar, deposited in a nearby park following a spell in his GI tract and a subsequent determination that it was in fact short on nutritional value. Sorry, TMI?

We did not know what to plan for when we headed south as far as how long we would be here & what we would need. We did fairly well though with our minimal wardrobes and necessities. We left many things hanging when we left and are looking forward to addressing those things.

I'm feeling better today and ready for the trip. I was fairly exhausted over the past two days, but without nausea or pain. Thank you all for checking in on me and sending your love and well-wishes. I love you.

Best,
Lina

July 31, 2022 ❧ *Kissing the sidewalk* ❧ Rand:

Rand again: We arrived late in the afternoon and kissed the effing sidewalk as we disembarked. We are both – all three, I think – looking forward to the nine or ten days respite from the hellscape (meaning no disrespect to those who have made their home therein) of the San Fernando Valley. Ravi appeared to enjoy catching up on his pee-mail (a lot of “reply all”) and Lina is resting comfortably. As she observed earlier today, we aim to put in train such arrangements for our extended absence from these precincts (with, it is devoutly hoped, intervals of parole) as may keep the household running and secure in “sleep” mode during our exile. Thanks to all for your support.

August 1, 2022 ❧ *Our own beds* ❧ Lina:

Home again, home again.

We made it safely, straight shot, w/o need to add gas. Amazing. Car gets better mileage on the highway. Still.

I was able to drive the first leg, then needed to rest. Rand had to drive the entire remainder of the way out to L.A. I'm feeling stronger today. I think most of it was how run down I was from the nausea and 3 day hospital stay & ER visits. I'm ready to get on an exercise schedule and without our built-in stairmaster routine, I will need to build on that with our own available, but not necessary, stairs in the house.

We had a nice dinner & were all happy to be in our own beds, especially Ravi, who did not wake Rand at his newly adopted pattern of 3:00 or 4:00 am.

Lina at the wheel

A true daughter of the Southland, Lina loved to drive, and I was generally happy to be driven. Left to my own devices I'm inclined to walk or take public transit if these are practical options; Lina was more like Steve Martin's character in *L.A. Story*, who would drive to a destination three houses down the street. On the interstate she tended to be an assertive motorist, weaving in and out of lanes at speeds sometimes approaching 100 mph while her husband cringed discreetly in the passenger seat.

I suspect that many of the parishioners at College Avenue Presbyterian might have been nonplussed at the – how to put this? – at the saltiness* that informed her opinions, freely vouchsafed, regarding the skills (or lack thereof) of nearby drivers. “My dear,” I would reproach her mildly, “*they* can't hear you, but *I* can.” She'd generally dial it down at this reminder. “Just imagine what I'd be like if I weren't a loving Christian!”

**I was put in mind on these occasions of a line from a history of France during the reign of Louis XIV. The author alludes to but does not quote the account of a quarrel between two fishwives, “conducted with a creditable pungency on both sides, but with a freedom of personal criticism and simile which unfits it for reproduction even in a footnote.”*



Cowell College, UC Santa Cruz, swallow-to-Capistrano style.

The Five Year Plan

Hitching south from Canada in 1972 I reached UC Santa Cruz on my twentieth birthday, and asked a passer-by to take my picture on a cheap borrowed camera. Still residing in town (although shortly to relocate) five years later I returned to the spot, and my then-spouse snapped a second photo. Thereafter it became a quinquennial tradition. The entire sequence, 1972-2022 can be found at:

<https://rcareaga.com/fiftyfive/decrepit22.html>

We will be back in LA in a week or so to resume chemo and associated tests. I believe surgery will be in 4 or 8 weeks, after chemo 2 or 3, depending on blood markers.

Thanks again so much for your caring.

Lina

August 2, 2022 ☺ *It's a wrap* ☺ Lina:

It's Rand's birthday. We are heading to Santa Cruz for Rand's 5 year birthday picture, which he has taken in front of the fountain at Cowell College at UCSC [see sidebar —*Ed*], since he was 20. Now, he says it's a wrap with 50 years of adventures and personal growth behind him. I think I've had my picture with him, as a side note, since 1997. Kind of the most normal thing we've done in a while.

I'm trying to increase my caloric intake. I weighed 107 today, down from my usual 128. But that loss is from the nausea before chemo. The pancakes and added protein shake should help.

I have to stay out of the sun & away from people, but we can do the UC Santa Cruz pictures after which, I can recline at his brother's house while they visit the Boardwalk and Rand's favorite thing in the world, kinetic rides. You never saw Rand smile like this in any other setting. I will be content to read and sit at Greg's home w/ Ravi.

Happy Day.

Lina

August 3, 2022 ☺ *Digestive withdrawal?* ☺ Lina:

Yesterday's excursion was pretty exhausting even though it's only about an hour & 10 minute drive. It was fun to do the pictures & Rand had a nice birthday with the visit with his brother who just retired at the end of June. The picture is the last in a 50 year cycle where Rand has had his picture taken since he was 20, 140 lbs, w/ his dark features, including straight black hair down to his butt. Ah, 1972.

Today has been more recovery. I have not taken any anti-nausea medication today & I think maybe my digestive tract is giving withdrawal signs. Still feeling stronger. Maybe a hamburger was over ambitious, but

I've got weight to gain. So protein seems a good option. We probably won't have anything to report until we return to LA. God bless you all and we hope you are enjoying your summer.

Best,

Lina

August 9, 2022 ☺ *Inferno redux* ☺ Lina:

Hi,

We're back in the Valley at 100 degrees. We arrived at around 2:30 & it is hot.

I got a buzz cut yesterday because I'm starting to shed. I have a doctor's appointment tomorrow, so I'm hoping to get a better idea of what the plan is for the next few weeks.

I'm feeling strong. I gained 3 pounds for a whopping 110 now. Still lots of eating to come. No nausea & no need for any anti-nausea medication for the past 5 days. So, all good.

Best,

Lina

August 11, 2022 ☺ *Better numbers* ☺ Lina:

Rand & I saw my doctor yesterday & I gave blood for test the results of which came today. My CA-125 marker was reduced by half to around 1400. I think that means the chemo is doing its work effectively. I meet w/ the surgeon on Monday during my chemo round two.

We used our energy today to clean house, wash sheets, vacuum, clean bathrooms. So, I am feeling stronger on this third week since treatment began. We are eating & I'm eating more. I gained 3 pounds, so I'm moving in the right direction. Ravi is still up by 5 am, but seems to have settled back in now.

We expect a quiet weekend with no news to report.

Best to all,

Lina



The new look, satin-lined for scalp comfort.

August 12, 2022 ☺ Yes, we have no bandanas ☺ Lina:

Serious hair loss has begun. I will need more bandanas. Oh my.

August 13, 2022 ☺ Summer style ☺ Lina:

New look for the summer, thanks to LaJoyce and her fashion/comfort insight. The air conditioning is no longer surprising me with how cold it is when blowing on short short hair (as long as that lasts). I'm now cozy. Satin lined, it's way comfortable. Who needs hair?

August 15, 2022 ☺ Chemo in the can ☺ Lina:

Chemo round 2 in the can. Today's chemo took from 8:30 until 4:00 pm. We had to take a pause in the administration for half an hour when I got flushed and had cramps in reaction to the levels. A quarter dose of Benadryl fixed me up and the rest of the administration proceeded without problems. I was very tired when we go home, but an hour nap & I was feeling much better.

We had a nice dinner of leftover petrale sole, lasagne, steamed romanescu with butter and, due to a rare craving, milk. Then we had a 20 minute dog walk. I met with the nutritionist today & followed her advice to walk at least 10 minutes after eating to aide digestion. I feel better for it. No nausea, but I got some type of anti-nausea medication in today's infusion so maybe that is why.

Love the port. I could hardly feel the blood draw, today's five hour drips and related injections. I can imagine how bad my veins would suffer with multiple IVs.

I met with the surgeon and we laid out a plan. Surgery is expected be the first week of October and I may be in the hospital as long as a week in the main LA facility for Cedars. Until then, round 3 September 6 after Labor Day. We plan to go back to the Bay Area near the weekend, depending on how I feel. So far so good.

Love to all,
Lina

August 18, 2022 ❧ *Après le deuxième tour* ❧ **Lina:**

Three days after chemo round 2 and I'm experiencing a similar curve of fatigue with some aches. Hair loss continues. Still no nausea and feeling strong enough to cook, clean house and grocery shop. Definitely getting stronger. I have a month to try to gain some weight. Chemo round 3 is September 6, the get ready for surgery in early October. We can do this.

We're heading back to the Bay, tomorrow if strong enough, for about 10 days where we can address basics and get a new mailbox because ours has been vandalized again, leaving mail scattered about.

Best wishes to all and thanks for your prayers and concerns.

Lina

August 19, 2022 ❧ *Traveling mercies* ❧ **Lina:**

Traveling mercies, home safe and sound.

We made good time, but it was hot out there, over 100 degrees until we descended into Oakland and 68 degrees. I have become much more aware of the complications of high temperatures.

Ravi is happy to be home on his pillow without barriers needed to keep him safe from falling down the stairs, as evidenced by his blissful slumber here. He does get stronger using the stairs too, but barriers are mandatory.

We look forward to addressing the neglected details here at home. We need to replace our vandalized mail box which was open with scattered mail nearby. We will be back to the Valley about August 30 for my doctor's appointment on the 31. Then, round 3 on September 6. The side effects have been manageable. I continue my weight gain efforts although I don't feel like eating. Ice cream in a protein shake always sounds good though.

I hope you are all well and loving those near to you.

Lina



Ravi here conveys the sentiment of the entire household.



The new, heavily armored mailbox, which has presented a target sufficiently hard to send the thieves with which (alas!) our neighborhood is abundantly provided off in search of easier prey.

August 25, 2022 ❧ *Domestic impedimenta* ❧ Lina:

Hi from Oakland,

It sure is easy to get caught up in all the things that need attention at home. Our new mailbox is installed, thanks to Rand's & Robert's team engineering. Who knew that our previous locking mailbox had a plastic top that was no match for a screwdriver. I also got some low stress legal work done that I still have to complete, only one matter.

I'm continuing to feel stronger. I've figured out that I have five or six weeks left to get as strong as possible before I'm lying around for a week recovering from surgery. So, I'm gradually adding things that make me move & build muscle tone, if not muscle.

I'm walking deliberately and consistently after eating at night particularly, as advised by the nutritionist. She said, "it only takes 10 minutes" to get that digestion working after a meal. I started back in Northridge & have found it really aids the digestion at night, 10 minutes minimum (but I usually do 15) of laps around the center of the house while here. I'm walking about 2.5 miles per. Considering I needed the scooter to shop for groceries a month ago, I've made huge progress. Maybe I will be ready to ride my bike in the stationary trainer by mid-September when we're back during the interval before expected surgery during the first week of October.

I've also taken up cooking most of the meals at night. Rand does the dishes, but part of my post-dinner walking includes clearing the dishes and putting away leftovers. That's 5 minutes right there & moving arms. Simple pleasures, who knew?

I definitely feel much better after I get to day 5 past chemo. My next installment, number three is September 6 and we will be in LA for about a week after. I'm not gaining weight yet despite the root beer floats and forced snacking. But, I am getting more calories in, so I'm working on it.

I have not figured out how to respond to comments people leave, but I can read them & thank you for the many expressions of love.

I send my love & thanks to you,

Lina

August 27, 2022 ☺ *Costly canine maintenance* ☺ Lina:

Dear loved ones,

Well here it is Saturday, the weekend & time to make sure we pack everything we will need in L.A. I see laundry, a trip to Trader Joe's and shopping for stuff we can't find in L.A, like pasta from the Pasta Shop, in my immediate future. I feel good and ready to start packing.

Yesterday, I dropped Rand & Ravi at the off-leash dog park on the Bay and next door to Costco, and I went there to pick up Ravi's meds. I walked instead of using the motorized shopping cart as I have needed in early August. The vastness of Costco is intimidating, but I thought, "I'm strong now." I took a cart to lean on & to use for the Costco-size paper products. I went to the pharmacy, loaded up on the paper products & was back at the dog park to pick up "the Boys" in 25 minutes. It feels good to be able to do simple things like this & it's definitely substantial progress.

They should have a prescription coverage plan for senior dogs, dog care Plan D. Ravi's injectable glucosamine was \$145, but it is what brought him back from debilitating arthritis that had him unable to get up on his own in March. He is motoring around now going up and down the stairs to our backyard. Ravi and I are on parallel tracks, but my meds are much cheaper.

I have not received the disc of my CT scan from Kaiser that I need for the surgeons at Cedars to use. The second one should have gone out in the mail by this past Monday. If it doesn't come today, we likely will need to wait until Tuesday to head south, so I can contact Kaiser again & try to get it sent to my address in Northridge. I remind myself: it will be fine; God's in charge & I have time to get the disc for my appointment on September 12, or I will do what I must to get it before October; stress is wasted energy. OK, I feel better now & will focus on what I can do to pack & get ready for L.A.

Chemo 3 is September 6. I expect 4 weeks off before surgery so I don't have a specific surgery date. The fourth week gives time for the Avastin (third part of my infusion regimen) to leave my system. I don't know if blood tests before October will show that the Avastin is sufficiently out of

Functionaries

Speaking as one who passed his alleged career in the bowels of a bureaucracy, I am obliged to report that the institutional culture of most of these organizations will in time grind down most of its employees to behave like...bureaucrats: rigid, hidebound, unyielding. Not always, though. Occasionally one encounters someone who can cut through the red tape. This is seldom the individual with the exalted title. In college I found it was not the dean but the department secretary (making perhaps a quarter or a fifth of the dean's salary) who could actually make things happen.

This is what DeMariay did for Lina. She never forgot it. I'm going to try to see that a copy of this book reaches him.

my blood to enable efficient post-surgery healing that it would otherwise suppress.

I am amazed at the encouragement, helpful tips and other good stuff I receive from friends and loved ones. Prayers are coming from so many, Alabama to Oakland, and parts in between. Prayer has power & I appreciate the love so much. I also have an ample supply of head coverings, creative bandana's with everything from dragons eating pizza (red) & robots (navy), fashionable chemo caps & an assortment of satin lined slaps. I don't know whether I will buy a wig, as a friend suggested, but it might be fun. For now, I'm enjoying my caps.

Be well my friends & enjoy the day.

Lina

August 29, 2022 ❧ *One person's caring* ❧ Lina:

Today I experienced the difference one person's caring can make. DeMariay thank you.

I had planned to leave this morning for LA. But the crucial CT scan disc did not arrive on Friday. I had ordered it thought Kaiser's East Bay Request for Records office on August 19 for a second time because my mailbox was vandalized as reported by friends on August 18 and the copy reportedly sent out on August 12 by Kaiser Imaging did not arrive. Sorry for this long story but I think I need to tell it.

My surgeons need this disc to see the tumor shown therein, and have tried to get it with my consent since July 21. My doctor at Cedars asked me last visit on August 10 to see what I can do to get it. So, I called today to try to determine whether and when the second request was processed.

When I got a person, she said the CD was sent out on August 12 and I needed to contact Kaiser Imaging directly, her office could do nothing further & there was no record of a second request on August 19. She transferred me to Kaiser Imaging in Richmond, where I eventually got to a recorded message from the Imaging Library in Richmond saying all requests for imaging discs must go to East Bay Request for Records. I did not think Richmond was the right Kaiser to process my request so I called Radiology Imaging in Oakland. The person said only East Bay RfR

could process the necessary request. I wanted to cry, but called back to East Bay RfR. Enter DeMariay. I told him I hoped he could help me because it was complicated.

I relayed my need for the disc and attempts to get it. He said, "I've got you," and told me to hold on while he went down the hall to Imaging. He returned and said he would call me in about an hour when he had the disc in hand and I could pick it up, although his office is officially closed today to catch up on their backlog. Indeed, DeMariay called, gave me his inside phone number to call when I got to the Records Request department because the office was closed. I called. He gave me the disc with my CT scan., and said, "I told you I've got you." Nothing short of a miracle and he did it, but I think I saw the face of God in him. That love and caring from someone I did not know, but will remember. And, I've heard that reassurance in my prayers from the Holy Spirit, "I've got you." I knew that, but forgot in my stress out.

We head for LA early tomorrow, my sister's birthday. They are having a heatwave down in the Valley starting Wednesday. I have an appointment Wednesday with my primary at Cedars and give blood for a status check. Round 3, Tuesday and appointment with the second surgeon on September 12. Then we will be back in Oakland for a couple weeks. So, I have a plan to follow and remind myself to treasure my loved ones. Life is fragile so we must be strong, especially in giving kindness.

Love and peace to you all,
Lina

August 30, 2022 ☽ *The promise of a lovely dinner* ☽ Lina:

Arrived safely in Northridge, stopping at the local Whole Foods for provisions. It was 102 degrees, so Rand and I took turns waiting in the car with Ravi with the air conditioner running. I grabbed this chicken thigh package that is seasoned with onions, paprika, lime, orange, jalapeno. It smells great and with the leftover brown rice we brought and the romanesco broccoli it promises to be a lovely dinner. Hopefully it will cool off enough soon for Ravi, Rand and I to enjoy an after dinner walk.

Tomorrow think I will learn more about the effect of the past two chemo infusions. But, it may take another day to get lab results. I'm so relieved



The lovely dinner in question (and answered).

to have the disc to give to my doctor so he can put it in their system which the surgeons will be able to access to view it. Technology working.

Best to you all,

Lina

August 31, 2022 ☞ *Not much clarity* ☞ **Lina:**

Not much clarity yet. My doctor said I am responding well to the chemo by his metrics, CA-125 is going down, I'm feeling stronger & the fluid retention is down. I gave him the CT scan disc which will be entered in their system, I will have another CT scan for comparison & current status on Sept. 19. So, we won't get back home the week of the 12th as we thought. We may head home after the CT scan. Whether surgery will be the first week or second week of October is unknown. Review of my blood work & the current CT scan will be factors in the calculation. Remain flexible, "I've got you."

So nothing much here but efforts to exercise & gain weight until Sept. 19. All is well & we are eating well, as evidenced by last night's dinner & last of the strawberry & other berry pie we had today with the morning coffee. We have the special hazelnut tools [? —*Ed.*] also.

Love to you,

Lina

September 1, 2022 ☞ *But new clarity on CaringBridge* ☞ **Lina:**

Oh my. I just figured out that there were comments linked to each posting, and rather than "view all comments" I was viewing only a few. I read the comments back to July 13 and apologize for not replying sooner. Thank you for such an outpouring of love. I think I know now how to navigate the site. Certainly I understand it better.

I have 5 days of nothing in particular to do. So, I'm cleaning house, doing laundry and eating. Again I'm amazed how much stronger I'm getting daily. Rand & I unloaded the provisional table from the trunk of the car (it was pretty heavy) & I rearranged to second level tables. Proof positive. We're making it home, & Ravi approves, as you will see by the picture.

Pizza and Greek salad for basic dinner plans. Right now, I think it's time for a protein shake w/ Haagen Dazs, berries & apple juice.

Thank you for this amazing tool for sharing communications of love & support.

Love and gratitude,

Lina

September 5, 2022 ☺ LA River: not quite the same ☺ Lina:

Holiday weekend & my brother in Oxnard has offered an escape from the heat & fresh fish barbecue with temps in the 70s. Yes! I'm at the far end of my last chemo & feeling strong enough for an outing. It feels like a normal activity before the next flurry of cancer related activities, which seem like normal life now.

I think of the Labor Day holiday as our usual trip to our friend's cabin on the American River, to close it up for the rest of the year. Our friend has enlisted other cabin holders to winterize. Maybe next year we will enjoy the company of the many friends at the cabin and the smell of the forest. The picture is from last year during the early summer with our friend Gail, her dog and a child from the next cabin who loves Ravi.

Meanwhile, it's hot here in Northridge but it also is comfortable with Rand and Ravi in the air conditioning. We do our after-dinner walk each night and last night it was 90 degrees at 8:30 p.m.

Tuesday is chemo round 3, Monday Sept. 12, I meet the other surgeon who will administer the HIPEC and remove any cancer she finds outside the female reproductive equipment. Monday Sept 19 a C'T scan. Then I'm free until September 30 when I see my oncologist. But the September 30 date and the surgery date are not yet firm. I will have about 10 days in Oakland before we return, tentatively on Sept. 29. A full schedule, but plenty of time to reflect upon my gratitude for my many blessings.

Enjoy the weekend and the holiday, if you get one. I hope you can take time to enjoy your loved ones and take care of yourself too.

Love to you,

Lina



A representative stretch of the American River, where we passed most of our Labor Day weekends for twenty years.



The Los Angeles River, photographed a few hundred yards from the Northridge condo, not exactly ready for its closeup, Mr. DeMille.

September 6, 2022 ❧ *Splitting the trip* ❧ Lina:

Hello dear loved ones,

Chemo 3 is in & the fatigue along with it. The rate of the drip is faster now. The Avastin now is in after half an hour rather than 1½ like the first time. Taxol the platinoid now are dispensed in half the time, so I was done by 2:10 with the same 8:30 start time. Much better in that way. I had my lunch, peanut butter sandwich, apple sauce & string cheese to keep the calories going. It was cold today in the Infusion Center & my pink Slap (seen in the picture) kept my head nice and warm, while a nice warm blanket did the rest.

The nutritionist and the palliative care doctor came by for a check-in and my blood counts were improved also. Red and white blood cells were in the normal range as were all but others, and those were close. I don't know about the CA-125 marker yet. For some reason it is not listed with the others but my primary oncologist has the readings and the surgeon should have it when I go. I will ask.

Speaking of asking, I'm compiling a list of questions for the associated surgeon-oncologist, Dr. Gangi, who administer the HIPEC frequently. I will meet with her on September 12 at the main Cedars hospital in LA. A week later, September 19, I have a CT scan. Then there will be either 10 or 16 days after that before we need to be back in LA, we think.

Because of the change in schedule presented by the CT scan & the unsettled surgery date, Rand & I have decided to split up the trip back to Oakland. Rand will return on September 13, accompanied by Ravi, driving. I will return the one-week car rental & walk over from there to the train platform, which is scheduled to board at 10:20 a.m. and deliver me at Jack London at about 9:15 where Rand will retrieve me. Although the Burbank Airport flight is 1½ hours in the air, the idea of flying is fraught. The canceled flights and crowds of opt-out, maskless travelers convinced me to just rest in a private "roomette" with my iPad, phone, computer and packed food bag, in case there isn't any food that I can eat on the train. This leaves me a back-up option of taking a plane, leaving for Oakland every couple hours until at least 5:00, if something goes wrong with the train. Complex.



Chilling out in the infusion center.

I will be alone in LA for a week, but I think it is a healthy change to build upon feeling strong and able to be more independent. I will have a car, good books to read and friends near by. A Valley Girl is always at home with a shopping mall nearby. I see a trip to Nordstroms Rack in my future. Rand can enjoy some solitude and deal with things at home that our previous schedule would have accommodated, including watering the indoor plants and taking Ravi to get his ears checked timely. So, we are ready for any schedule changes and a bit of perspective. But Rand does have strange dreams at home when I'm gone. The lights are always dim when he tries to turn them on, which makes him think, in his dream, "OK this must be a dream."

The nutritionist was thrilled today by my report that I'm walking at least 10 minutes after dinner & some of my friends said they will do the same. She also gave me some cartons of Kate Farms supplements that have 375 to 525 calories each (built around pea protein, rice protein & other nutrients in vanilla & chocolate w/ no forbidden ingredients) and are designed for weight gain. They also provide a complete meal replacement alone. I will bring that in my insulated food bag on the train.

Labor Day turned out to be staying home and baking rock fish from TJ's, broccoli & couscous. Not as good as the fresh fish in Oxnard, but my brother started feeling ill on Saturday and we decided to reschedule for a different time. Getting the flu would mess with me. Better safe for now.

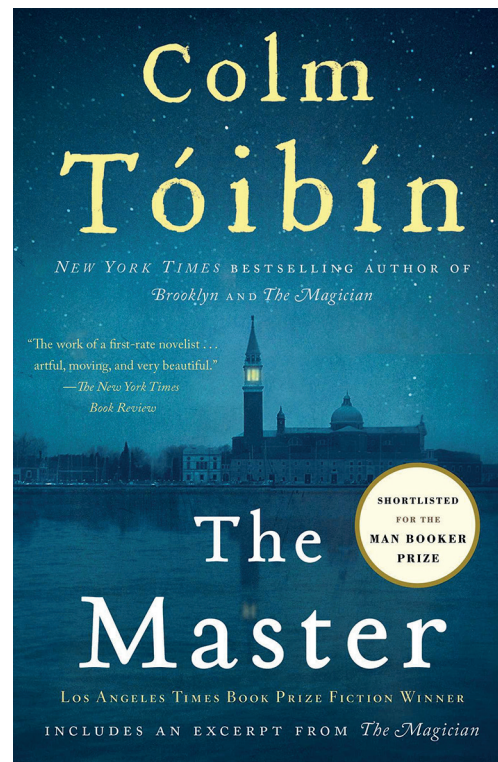
That is all I can report today. Be well & share some love today.

Best,
Lina

September 7, 2022 ☺ *Red-faced* ☺ **Lina:**

Feeling pretty good this first day after chemo 3 administration. No nausea. I'm a bit sluggish but had energy for a morning walk and to do chores as exercise. I cleaned two bathroom toilets, vacuumed the house & did a load of laundry. Then I pooped out and lay about to read more of *The Master*, which I am enjoying thoroughly.

In my morning efforts to boost my calorie intake, I tried one of the Boost-like cartons that the nutritionist gave me to sample, 450 extra calories. I turned bright red. Something was in there that I'm allergic



Lina here refers to this novel, which depicts the inner life of expat writer Henry James during the latter years of the XIX century.

to. I had a Zyrtec as a chaser, but I'm still red-cheeked at 2:30. Guess I will stick to root beer floats and real food. Tonight we have leftover rock fish cooked curry with yellow and zucchini squash w/ yogurt and fresh cilantro. Sounds better than a meal in a carton.

I can see my brother. It turns out that he was having an adverse reaction to a course of antibiotics that he was taking, too soon as it happened, before his own biopsy for prostate cancer. Plenty of worry to go around. But he does not have the flu, so I can go see him in Ventura next week when I'm alone. He won't know the results for a week.

That is the news for today. Hoping you are all feeling the Peace, enjoying the workweek and finding treasures of kindness and beauty therein.

Love to you,

Lina

September 9, 2022 ☸ *Protein drink exonerated* ☸ Lina:

The end of another week, Friday & the 23rd anniversary of buying our house on 9/9/99. How fortunate we are to have found it. We were in our late forties by then and could not have managed it without the help of our families and others. Given it was built in 1908, we knew we would have home repair until the end of time & we learned to plaster, install appliances, paint and excavate the sewer lateral. It is a good home.

I've been pretty tired and achey the past two days, as with the course of the first and second chemo installments. So, we are planning on relaxing by watching *The Queen*, with Helen Mirren, Tylenol at the ready. We don't have cable, but can play videos or stream through Rand's computer. I also improvised an indoor antenna so we can get a few more channels. Rand walked over to Lowes and got the wood support. It was no easy feat w/ strapping tape and available materials. It was taped to the railing until this morning.

I figured out that my red cheeks were not due to an allergic reaction to the protein drink, as I previously thought. It was sunburn from the brief moments I stepped into the sun that morning, wearing a hat, while Rand & I were walking Ravi. I had another protein drink to confirm. They really mean it when they warn of photo-sensitivity caused by chemo. So, the red glow was from the sun. It only lingered until the next day.



Cable if you're able; mast if you must. Lina's improvised antenna.

Rand & I are looking forward, with some anxiety, to seeing the surgeon in 3 days to get some clarity on scheduling and what to expect. Meanwhile, we hope to enjoy a lighthearted weekend with Robert & Rebecca, who will be stopping by here in Northridge on their way from Oakland to visit a friend in Pacific Palisades. I hope you all enjoy the weekend too.

Love to you,
Lina

September 12, 2022 ☞ *More questions than answers* ☞ Lina:

More questions than answers. So, be flexible.

I saw the surgeon at the Cedars LA location today after 1 hour & forty-five minutes in rush hour for a drive that is 33 minutes without traffic. The Bay Area does not have traffic like this. The surgeon ordered a colonoscopy and an MRI, in addition to the CT scan scheduled for next Monday.

I'm waiting for a call back to see whether the MRI can be done at the same place & time as the CT scan already scheduled. I need to make arrangements for the colonoscopy with one of the Cedars-associated independent doctors, but hope it can be local rather than the drive to on at the LA location.

Much coordination is required & the timing is up in the air for when surgery will be possible. I may need to get chemo round 4 before surgery because all necessary information needs to be available from testing. So, surgery may be mid to late-October.

Pray for good timing and calm. I will focus on resting in and trusting God's timing. I think it is hard to accept or manage being without control of the little things. Lack of control over the big things seem so much easier to accept. The truth of my lack of control is clear in the big things. But, the business of making arrangements seems like it is, or should be in my control. Nope. So, go with it & focus on gratitude for all this care and possibility. I feel lighter already.

Blessings to you,
Lina

September 13, 2022 ❧ *Riding the options* ❧ Lina:

A busy day. I got my rental car & Rand headed for Oakland. He arrived at 3:00 p.m. happy to have some cool daylight. I stopped for groceries on the way home & spent most of the day completing forms for a GI doctor to begin the scheduling process. Late yesterday I got an appointment for the MRI, which is tomorrow. So, one of two is going to be done before my intended departure date on September 20.

Amtrak is looking shaky with labor disputes to start disrupting service on Friday. The stock market freaked out today (not that I have any stock). It seems that the turmoil is everywhere. But, I've taken in Judy Gough's timely scripture suggestion, Proverbs 3:5-8, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding...this will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones." It is funny that I'm surprised when reading scripture brings me in alignment with the right track with no effort but to listen.

So, tomorrow the MRI and whatever comes together with other plans may be clearer. Depending on the GI doctor's schedule, I may not get back to L.A. I may go as originally planned or something else. I will pray, apply Proverbs 3: 5-8, wait and see what works. But, I feel at ease with riding the options now & trying to discern.

Ravi has a vet appointment on Sept. 19. So he will be getting acupuncture while I have a CT scan, which is now going to be without contrast because the MRI will cover that imaging that contrast would have shown.

I'm cozy here in the condo but it's pretty quiet without Rand & Ravi. I did my after dinner (lasagne & broccoli) walk around the inner pathways of condo complex. I had not really walked around inside since 2009 when I stayed here. I think I need to explore more during better light to see how to make the walk longer. Still I did get 15 minutes in & doing the dishes gave me a bit more moving about.

Maybe I will have a schedule at some point tomorrow and will decide what travel to arrange. The summer warmth will soon be gone.

I trust all is well with you and pray for your peace,

Lina

September 14, 2022 ❧ *Lots of known unknowns* ❧ Lina:

Two tasks completed, the MRI w/ & w/o contrast. I got an IV as part of the process for the contrast agent to be automatically injected in three stages at the correct time to correspond w/ the MRI doing its part as I held my breath, per instructions issued in the headphones. I also got a video appointment scheduled on Sept. 20 w/ the GI doctor. It must be completed before they will give me an appointment for the colonoscopy some time within the next 3 weeks. Still lots of known unknowns.

I don't have any other tasks on my calendar this but I can think of a few to add that might narrow down the the known unknowns. I think I will cancel my Amtrak trip on Sept. 20 and fly home on the 19th after the CT scan at 11:00 that morning. I will then make a plan to return after I get the date for the colonoscopy & determine, maybe, when the surgery can be scheduled or whether I will have another round of chemo on or about September 27.

Rand & I have our 17th anniversary on Saturday, September 24, so I'm hoping we will be together in Oakland. My sister took the photos of our wedding & I want to be home to leaf through the album. Bill married us at CAPC. We have great memories & pictures of the day.

Best to all,
Lina

September 15, 2022 ❧ *Riding the schedule rollercoaster* ❧ Lina:

I ran a few errands, bought another antenna and a wig, had three meals and a root beer float, and another day has passed. I also was able to advance my appointment with the GI doctor to in-person tomorrow morning, changed my travel plans to fly home Tuesday morning rather than take Amtrak (even though the strike is off), and got a flu shot. I made myself get the flu shot before indulging in wig shopping. So, seems I got quite a bit done in retrospect.

Since I will see the GI doctor tomorrow, I will know before I leave on Monday, assuming no change in travel plans, the date of my colonoscopy. I'm riding the schedule rollercoaster and reserve the right to change my reservation. The changing schedule has become mildly amusing. This may be how my friends in Alaska started to have betting pools



This Australian purveyor of soft drinks makes a range of superior products—we agreed that we had never tasted finer bottled root beer—although the label reveals stratospheric levels of sugar.

(25 cents) to see who would guess the closest prediction to when events actually happened, like betting when I and my companion would arrive at the Homestead from California via the Alcan Highway in 1976. I forget who won that one, but we arrived on the Fourth of July.

Based upon discussions with the GI's assistant, I have a guesstimate that the procedure date will within two weeks of tomorrow, which would put me back on track for surgery in the first two weeks of October. But, I will be home for our anniversary on Saturday it appears.

I was not able to try the wig on reportedly because of COVID. I had to take it or not. I took it & it does keep my head warm, but it feels like a disguise or a costume. Maybe I will wear it for Halloween, subtle. It's short, dark brown (a bit too dark for me) & the bangs hang over my eyes. I will try to resist cutting the bangs with the kitchen scissors. I have proper hair cutting scissors in Oakland. I have many options.

Cheers,

Lina

September 16, 2022 ❧ *Giving the Almighty a chuckle* ❧ Lina:

File under, woman makes plans to make God laugh.

I saw the GI doctor today and the colonoscopy will be Tuesday. Strange to say it but, answered prayer. My schedule is shaping up.

Rand's younger brother, Greg, says he's ready for a road trip, having recently retired, and can visit their other brother here in the Valley as part of it. He will arrive here tomorrow, visit other family; take me on Monday to return my rental car and CT appointment; take me to and from my colonoscopy appointment after substantial lending of sympathy about the preparation; and, we will drive home that day or the next, depending on my condition. This means canceling the airline ticket, easy peasey.

We shall see when the surgery will follow, assuming the doctors don't decide to do another round of chemo first. Another chemo round before surgery would happen on or about September 27 if surgery is delayed for some reason. I have a doctor's appointment scheduled September 30, based upon the projected surgery the first week of October. If the surgery is pushed to the next week, so will my doctor appointment. But, it appears that Rand and I will be home to enjoy a quiet anniversary there. Yay.

Modern life is so busy. There is so much activity going on around health care, as I was noticing today. Everyone is busy in every facility that I visit. New wings of hospitals are going up as traffic speeds around to a myriad of destinations. One would hardly know that there is any peaceful, quiet space at all amid the activity. I think we have to work at creating or finding that quiet, nurturing quiet. Prayer is one way I find it. Time spent with loved ones being present is another. It's such an amazingly complex and beautiful world of treasures that cost nothing but attention.

I feel fine after the flu shot, just a bit of a sore arm. I may be able to get the new COVID booster, if I can get it 2 weeks before surgery. Otherwise, I have to depend on my immunity from mid-June until I can get it.

Best to you all,
Lina

September 18, 2022 ☽ *Sit near the little room* ☽ Lina:

I'm looking forward to brunch with my youngest brother, his significant other & Rand's brother at the Odyssey Restaurant at the top of the hills. My brother just received a diagnosis of prostate cancer. Life seems unusually hard this decade. Now he is starting on the assessment & testing path with plenty of trying to secure timely and good care. More prayer for David.

I returned the rental car today. I still need to cancel my flight. The list of things I need to do is getting shorter now. Today I start drinking preparation for my colonoscopy with 1/2 gallon of Miralax after my last meal. Only clear liquids tomorrow, so I plan to enjoy eating today. After my CT scan tomorrow, I return home to drink the other 1/2 gallon and sit near the little room. Rand's brother has been through this and has excellent advice as did my friend who is a public health nurse. I'm looking forward to getting through this part on Tuesday afternoon.

That's all I can think of to report for now. Love to all and gratitude for your prayers and kind thoughts.

Lina

September 19, 2022 ☺ *Some good news* ☺ Lina:

Good news, doctor reports, NO cancer in my liver per the MRI. And, answered prayer that the tests will be done before the end of the month to allow surgery in early November.

Challenging night last night. My body did not like drinking the $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon of polyethylene glycol. I'm about to start on today's dose. I hope I can get through it within the 4 hour window. But, I must drink it slowly or it won't stay down. Tomorrow by noon, I should be past this part.

Greg & I will stay here and eat after I'm finished tomorrow. Then it's back to Oakland on Wednesday.

Love to you,
Lina

September 20, 2022 ☺ *Intestinal fortitude* ☺ Lina:

The GI doctor said no cancer in my intestines, but metastasis on the outside. That is good news. Also, it was answered prayer yesterday. I did not get sick drinking the laxative & I was able to consume it by 7:30 within the proper timeframe. It was much easier than the day before. Thank you for your prayers & well wishes.

I had an apple when I got home and a few ginger shortbread cookies after my nap. I'm planning what to eat for the rest of the day. Maybe some root beer w/o the float. I am trying to think of tofu type options that are easily digested. Thai food sounds good, but I need to avoid the spicy options that I usually go for. Maybe I will have a good salad with some pasta based addition.

I've sent my Gyn surgeon the good news about my intestines and hope to soon have a surgery date, or clarity on the schedule going forward.

Best to all,
Lina

September 21, 2022 ☺ *Good “cancer numbers”* ☺ Lina:

Home again safe & sound. Greg drove all the way & I rested enjoying the drive.

My doctor this morning said that the tumors are much smaller & showed me the CT images which showed much smaller masses. My CA-125 cancer marker has dropped from 2600 to 218, indicating the chemo is working well & he confirmed that CT results and the MRI show no cancer on the lung or liver. All good news. I have chemo 4 on Monday, September 26. Surgery projection is the week of October 24.

I'm intending to enjoy today, each day. Remind me if I slip. I am optimistic but I don't want to project too much into the future. I'm also concerned about my brother, hoping he can get his CT without delay that could impair his outcome. Please pray for him.

Worrying is a full-time job that I don't want. I chose the full-time pursuit of trusting God and resting in prayer despite reasons and reflex to worry. All the amazing answered prayers over the past months also remind me of the right course when I slip.

Rand is making BBQ ribs for dinner, roasted potatoes & broccolini. We will enjoy Greg's company through tomorrow, but he is hosting game night at home in Santa Cruz on Friday. Saturday is Rand's & my anniversary & I think we will have a nice meal at home, although it's hard to think of something to equal Rand's ribs. Maybe we will have to eat out. I can try my wig out maybe.

Blessings to you all,
Lina

September 23, 2022 ☺ *A dearth of delicacies* ☺ Lina:

It feels so good to be home for a few days. I feel stronger still with my slow fitness efforts. Rand & I walked over to the local sports bar last night for some food & football. Walking makes a big difference in how I feel. We may walk to the Piedmont for an afternoon matinee today. It seems a bit daunting, but we can always call Lyft or take the 51 back if I poop out.

I have some work and laundry to get done before we head back to LA Sunday, where temperatures are expected to be around 102 again. I



The "white-faced boy."



A floral treat from Bill and Beth.

will miss Zoom Church because of travel necessities. I'm making a list of Bay Area delicacies to acquire & take back with us. You can't find Semifreddi's, Firebrand bread or crumpets, nor do there appear to be chicken apple sausages without corn products there. So, we will make a trip to Piedmont Grocery in preparation.

My oncologist agreed that my recovery time from surgery will be better if I'm as fit as possible when I go in. I am working on it. I have not pumped up my bike tires to use my trainer stand though. Maybe when I get back. There are vitamins that I cannot take, but I just started back on B complex, which I am allowed. No multi-vitamins are allowed though or, I think, calcium and vitamin D.

I gave Ravi his Adequan, super glucosamine, injection yesterday, which still creeps me out. I'm better now at getting between the skin layers and not hurting him by hitting the muscle. He gets it every four weeks and the results brought him back from the abyss in March when he could not get up without help. He's 15 now, the old white-faced boy, and that's old for a big dog. He was weak in the back left leg when I walked him the night before last but I noticed improvement even yesterday. He was glad to see me when I got home & seems to smile a lot, as evidenced by his photo. Ahh, simple pleasures.

I'm hoping to be home next Friday, assuming the chemo side effects are the usual. That will give us about three weeks at home before we need to be back the week of surgery. We need to do yard clean up in preparation for rain before it starts in earnest. Still waiting for an imaging appointment for my brother. That's the up-to-the minute report on what appears to be God's plan.

Love to you all.

Lina

September 24, 2022 ☽ Cooking & gardening ☽ Lina:

Thanks to you all for the beautiful flowers and loving prayers. Special thanks to Bill & Beth who sponsored this lovely bright gift.

I think I'm almost done gathering the items to go to LA. Since I've decided not to cook for our anniversary, I need to freeze the lamb & other meats so I can take them & make the lamb & chorizo (tomatoes, chilies, olives,

etc. over noodles) dish there. It's yummy & we can freeze the leftovers for several meals. The challenge with freezing anything here is finding room in the freezer. Not a problem in L.A. I would have had to start much earlier to make it for tonight though. It is a slow cook meal.

But, the laundry is done. I finished my other work and sent it off to my co-counsel for my remaining case. I'm trying to remember what to take back & make sure I pack it. A lot of it is food & mostly cold stuff. Making a list is essential.

I did two garden bags of weeds in the backyard yesterday & we went to the movies at the Piedmont. It was too sunny to walk though. I'm probably better off for that because I was feeling the gardening this morning. Walking is such good exercise, all the more reason to walk to dinner or bus/BART combo. The strengthening plan is extended, so I am keeping after it.

Monday is chemo 4 so I'm expecting a few slow moving days. Assuming the usual pattern of side effects & doctor visits, we hope to be home by the weekend for nearly 3 weeks & feeling strong. I think I will be able to get my COVID booster when we get back and recover from that well before surgery.

Enjoy the sunny weekend. Love to you all.

Lina

September 25, 2022 ☞ *Heading south* ☞ Rand:

Anniversary dinner in Oakland Saturday evening. Returning to the southern inferno today.

September 26, 2022 ☞ *Heard it through the Grapevine* ☞ Lina:

I'm back in the Valley having chemo 4. The trip back was quick & easy. The hills through the Grapevine were looking beautiful. We got in at about 4 pm, about 5 hours, with most of what I intended to bring. We are here until about Friday. Rand is looking forward to several weeks at home after the side-effects of chemo ease & I am ready to travel. Jupiter seen in the west was its closest to the earth & brightest last night. It won't happen again for about 100 years. Should be pretty bright tonight as well.



Our seventeenth anniversary dinner at “Palmetto,” a stylish little bistro within strollable distance with, as I recall, scrumptious fare, expertly-mixed adult beverages and attentive staff. Alas, like Lina the establishment has not endured.



One of the “extravagantly decorated staff.”

Turkey tacos are on the menu tonight. We brought the lovely flowers that the Beattys & my Church family sent. The beautiful, work-of-art card they sent was decorated by a friend of the Beattys. Our friend Bob Evans from Mendocino also sent a card this week with Jewish prayers of healing, and my friends from Missouri sent a book of prayers. Super nice to receive them & to reflect upon them throughout the day. I apologize for not acknowledging the other cards & cheery gifts that people have sent with love and caring. Please know that I and Rand are grateful, but a bit disorganized these days. The many answered prayers loom largely throughout this odyssey. Thank you so much for them. Prayer is powerful. Ephesians 6:12-18.

Rand & I had a wonderful anniversary dinner at fairly extravagant restaurant, Palmetto, with extravagantly decorated staff, on Telegraph & 19th Street. We walked. It's surprising how much better I feel after a walk. The exercise was gratis. Rand, Ravi and I also had our after-dinner walk last night after a dinner of frozen lasagne & zucchini. The air was warm and nice. Lamb & chorizo dinner is on hold for a day or two.

It's another perfect day in the Valley, although temperatures are expected to reach 102. I can't take much of the heat, but I kinda enjoy it in the shade for a while & it makes for a very pleasant evening temperature. Soon we will be cold. Rand might even start to enjoy being in the warm Valley [Nope —Ed.] as the days become cold and rainy in Oakland. Meanwhile, the fitness efforts continue.

That's the news here. Enjoy the week of beautiful weather in the Bay Area.

Love,

Lina

September 27, 2022 ❧ *Too torpid to think* ❧ Lina:

Flowers brighten up every room.

We had a big breakfast burrito, 2 eggs, bacon, refried beans, cheese, tomatoes, sour cream & chipotle Cholula with apple juice chaser. Oh my. That should help my calorie count. My weight is only up to 106. I'm defrosting the lamb & chorizo for tonight. But, it many not happen until tomorrow depending on my energy level. Right now I'm just too torpid to think about cooking.

We are aiming for Thursday departure via Santa Barbara, where I need to pick up documents. I hope to see my brother on the way. He did get his CT scan and has found a provider to do the other dye test next week, rather than wait for the test his doctor offered in November. Going home by way of Santa Barbara means a longer drive time & late arrival in Oakland on a street cleaning day. But those are small considerations & plans are still unsettled. We may decide to go pick up the documents this week & come back here until Friday or so depending.

All my bloodwork looks good from yesterday. I'm feeling a bit tired but that is the usual after chemo. Still, we just had a quick post-eating walk to the end-of-the block park & senior center. Nothing to do here now but rest, eat & check in with local friends. Oh yes, and house cleaning and laundry. We are so grateful to have a kitchen here. We've moved right in with additions scattered liberally everywhere.

Stay well and enjoy,

Lina

September 30, 2022 ☺ Canine considerations ☺ Lina:

Back home & glad to land after a couple quick turnarounds. We got home yesterday at around 3:30. All of us were tired. We headed for Whole Foods around 6:30 to get some precooked dinner, rotisserie chicken. We cooked a side of cauliflower w/ Judy's bread stick, voila. We were in bed by 8:30. It took a while to get rolling today though.

Day 4 after chemo has turned out to be the roughest. But, I'm comforted by the idea that the tumors are having an increasingly rough experience too. Judging by the imaging the tumors are taking a good hit and are much smaller. I can feel the easing of pressure in my abdomen which evidences this even with the side effects. The chemo side effects are headache, sweating and a bit of nausea. These are addressed quite well by Tylenol and a Reglan (anti-nausea pill). I calculate my adverse reaction as quite mild and consider myself fortunate.

We didn't manage breakfast today until around 10:30, scrambled egg w/ cheese, Trader Joe's freezer-to-oven croissants & coffee. Ahh, life is good. I followed up with my 10 minute walk around the center of the house, my regimen now after meals. Last night, I managed to make lentil, lime



"Grateful to have a kitchen here." Somehow we transported the bouquet (see entry from a few days ago) intact from Oakland to Northridge, where the blooms have brightened the room.

& lamb soup that we will have tonight. So, we won't have much to do for getting dinner together.

I know I had some thoughts last night about what I needed to do today, the weekday this week, but I can't recall what it was. So, I'm just planning to read and take it easy. I'm planning to get my COVID booster next week, hoping I won't feel sick from that. I can take the sore arm. But, I think getting the booster (the new Omicron one) is the thing to do. At least two weeks before surgery was recommended by my doctors. I will have to figure out where I can get it, assuming I can.

Ravi, Rand & I are happy the drive home is behind us. We don't have a surgery date yet, but we will have about 3 weeks before our return to Northridge. Our biggest worry is making arrangements for Ravi when I am having surgery & in the hospital. We have a few ideas but nothing solid yet. We can't leave him alone at the condo. The drive from the condo to the hospital took us over 2 hours (33 miles) when we went there & the parking garage was hot even though it was a covered multi-story garage in Beverly Hills. If we get a hotel near the hospital, we can't leave Ravi there either. He has abandonment issues. I'm praying for an answer that will not traumatize him.

I feel so blessed by the love and prayers that you have shared with me. It makes me feel like this is not hard & I can handle whatever with God's grace. Thank you for sharing with me.

Lina

October 5, 2022 ☯ *Focus on gratitude* ☯ Lina:

Being mindful of my blessings. It's another beautiful day in the Bay as Fleet Week is underway. I seem to get busy with things as soon as we get home, but I'm out of touch with the daily routines. Fortunately, I'm still able to remember what we have on hand in both locations.

I'm feeling better over the past few days. I have run errands & shopped for groceries to restock. As friends say how well I'm doing in these times, I think it's not that bad & it is my fortunate circumstances & peace that is a gift which is from my blessings, not me. I am reflecting with my best non-judgmental questioning why I feel a kind of unworthiness for the sympathy as I watch the evening news and witness such vast suffering.

How do people go on through such pain? How could I ever complain. But being weighed down by sadness is not God's plan for us. So all I can do is pray, and try to focus on gratitude. Still, I feel kind of guilty seeking joy in such a world of suffering. Pretty funny how gratitude and joy can be corrupted by the way I view it. I feel better after I turn it over to God & keep seeking gratitude, and joy that is God's plan. There will be more questioning.

I have been working on my remaining case this week. I'm aware of how even the simple stuff, like thinking and calculating the angles, wears me out. My paralegal is downstairs in my office indexing exhibits and sorting through duplicates. She has the hard work. I feel tired just thinking about the focus it takes to hold in one's mind the documents and sort them. She is a blessing. She is Russian and has two adult sons who live in Russia. I remember them as children and wonder if they will die in Ukraine. Ahhh, the bad stuff humans get up to. More prayer needed.

I read recently about a woman who went into remission a few years ago. The focus of her game plan was eliminating negative thoughts & environments, like when people are arguing, & instead cultivating peaceful thoughts & places, like gardening. Litigation is rife with conflict & anxiety. But, God has given me this work to do ("You want me to do *what?*" says I), so I will finish the job if I can. It is interesting when I can move forward at a slower pace knowing that I just have to move forward doing my part.

I think I can get things done over the next week or so because I feel better. But, I'm down to 103 pounds because, I think, when I get busy I forget to eat enough. Maybe I need a root beer float. I pray that you all enjoy the remainder of your week and the Peace, with joy.

Love,
Lina

October 6, 2022 ☽ *On blessings* ☽ Lina:

Surprise blessings that I did not realize I needed.

I needed Tylenol today & an anti-nausea pill to get going this morning. I had a headache and hints of nausea but I resisted taking medications thinking it would pass. But eventually I thought, just take them & will feel better. I knew I needed them if I wanted relief. Not so with what my soul

A death in Ukraine

"I remember them as children and wonder if they will die in Ukraine." We knew our friend's sons as teenagers early in the present century—Vladimir, the dreamer, and Vitalii, the hustler, the go-getter. Both young men, born in the USSR, eventually became disenchanted with their lives stateside, and, about ten years apart, returned to St. Petersburg.

A couple of years ago Vitalii answered his country's call to "fight the fascists" in Ukraine. Now, I am personally about as sympathetic to the Kremlin's campaign there as I was back in the day to the Pentagon's in Southeast Asia, which is to say, not at all, but quite apart from the cause for which he enlisted, Lina and I worried for the lad. He went missing in combat at the end of 2024, and his body was recovered a few months later. "The bad stuff that humans get up to" indeed.



Vitalii, then about twelve.



The cards just keep on coming.

needed. It was only after I received the nurturing that I realized I needed some encouragement. Someone else knew though.

First, my doctor from Kaiser called, following up on my status-report email, to see how I was doing. He told me that Cedars uses the same medical records system and that he could read my treatment notes & coordinate with Cedars on any care that I need while I'm in Oakland. It was a great relief somehow & I didn't even know that I needed that reassurance until it came.

Then the mail came with a card from Chickwendu that quoted Psalm 73:26, "God is the strength of my heart & my portion forever," & that he was praying that God will give me strength when mine is gone, along with grace, mercy, and God's unending love to see me through. It was so powerful to think of God's love that you all have shown me. And, Chick also has been such a powerful influence in the many years I have heard him speak of his faith & God's promise. He inspired & lifted me up when I didn't even realize I needed it.

My nature is to say, I'm fine, because I have not yet realized I need help or that something is not fine. The face of God is kind of a shocker when I think I'm fine. The contrast between my "I'm fine" and God's, "now you're fine," is dramatic. I know I'm fine in my way. But the shift that happens when I'm listening to God's message blows my view away. Coping & carrying on is what we do. Lifting the worry right outa here is beyond me. It's the power we share in fellowship & love. So cool.

I guess I'm feeling a bit shaky today, but when I'm low on energy, I'm quieter and can reflect on great promise & encouragement that comes from the love we share. How amazing it is.

So, I'm fine after my COVID booster today. I will have a Tylenol though and smile with gratitude which is easy to see today. Chicken soup is on the stove slow cooking for tomorrow. Rand is barbecuing steak to go w/ broccolini & couscous. What a man. I'm grateful.

Love,
Lina

October 8, 2022 ❧ *Driveway dreams* ❧ **Lina:**

I have been trying to move forward with eking out a parking space in front of our house. I've longed for a driveway since 1999 and have been working on it since 2014, but now I finally have a plan & the survey that goes with it, thanks to Marda's referral to an engineer. Next step will be trying to get Oakland to agree to a plan & issue the permit. Then I will need to find a contractor.

It took longer to feel better this round. It may be because I got a COVID booster on Thursday. I'm feeling better now. The headache let go w/o Tylenol since 6:00 a.m. I did not get moving until 10:00 after about 12 hours sleep (except for the 2 hours in the middle when I was awake). As usual, I feel much better after I get moving than I do when I first get up. I can't tell whether I'm sleeping too much, but I'm going with the sleep.

I talked w/ my surgeon yesterday afternoon. He was working on setting the surgery date during the week of October 24 & said he would let me know the date on Monday. Then I will be able to schedule & reschedule accordingly and may get an extra week at home. We would then return to LA around October 19. It seems the timing will work out perfectly, but then it's always perfect after I make adjustments. I'm not worrying about it. Grace again. It has not been difficult to "go with it" and I'm spontaneously feeling both patient & happy, except when I watch the news.

It is another lovely day. I think we will go for a matinee if *Amsterdam* is nearby. Maybe we will get a good walk in. I hope you all have a good weekend too. I'm looking forward to Zoom Church and enjoying Monte's first sermon after his sabbatical.

Love to you,
Lina

October 11, 2022 ❧ *Waiting for a date* ❧ **Lina:**

Still waiting for a date.

We may be heading back to LA Thursday because I have a doctor's appointment on Friday. But I'm guessing we won't need to be back until the 19th or so based on my discussions with the surgeon last Friday. The scheduling for my surgery is still unknown. Because the surgery is being



Lina's folly.

Where angels fear to park

Up until 2022, when it was pushed back to second place, Lina's dearest wish was for off-street parking, and to this end, flush with the proceeds from a legal settlement, she commissioned a "driveway" in 2016. A problem arose when, testing the initial configuration (which we may charitably describe as inspired rather than engineered), it was discovered to be incompatible with the wheelbase of a typical sedan. She had it resculpted twice, at hideous expense, with no better result, and was plotting still, in the summer preceding her death, to bring the project somehow to a successful conclusion. I feel certain that she would have wanted me to cement this as her legacy; equally certain, alas, that I'll be doing no such thing. The task must fall, if at all, to some eventual purchaser following my own death.

performed at the Cedars LA location, the staff that usually handles notification of scheduling is not generating the notices & does not know when or whether the LA location has scheduled my surgery. So, the surgeon's assistant in Tarzana is trying to determine whether a date has been set and/or when it might be. Then I will know whether I can reschedule my appointment on October 14 with my oncologist to the next week, since the date was set assuming a 3-week schedule for chemo & surgery would change that to 2 weeks after surgery. It's all connected & complex. I think there is a metaphor in there, but I have been getting carried away with such thinking and I will give it a rest.

We are enjoying being home, but there are all manner of daily chores and maintenance that take over our time. I have access to my office & have been attending to business. I get engrossed for hours. Rand is at the repair shop having the brakes inspected & repaired because the front end shakes when the brakes are applied going down hill. We want to be in good shape with all the driving & having to find some new repair option in LA sound too complicated. It is easier to deal with stuff from home. Rand reports that the car will be ready tomorrow. He is getting the dealer's shuttle to BART home. I have a dental cleaning on Thursday afternoon, so it would be a late start to LA if we must go. I'm not worrying though. We are ready for all the various scenarios and we have practiced an efficient relocation.

My brother is researching his treatment options. Surgeons want to operate, Radiology wants to irradiate, and the doctors who only do freezing want to do that. One really must investigate & try to be informed about what the best course is.

Meanwhile, it's another beautiful day here. I have only 1 or 2 more loads of laundry.

Enjoy a blessed day,
Lina

October 12, 2022 ☽ *Car stuff* ☽ Lina:

Schedule changes give us another week at home,

Still no surgery date. However, I sent email to my oncologist this morning about my appointment on October 14. He said I could reschedule our

appointment to next week. So I don't need to travel to LA tomorrow after my dentist appointment. Yay. Yesterday's worries are resolving.

Yesterday, my van would not start. Dead battery. My neighbor does auto repair out of his garage & has been moving my van on street cleaning days. This Thursday is street cleaning, \$68 ticket. My neighbor jumped the van this morning & moved it on our side of the street. I can charge the battery from here, or Yohanas will charge it & move it again for street cleaning on October 25, when I will be gone. Hero!

I still have not heard back about the surgery date. But, I can just wait for scheduling of that now. I have more time to address potential drain blockage at the back of the house before the rain starts, rather than worrying about whether the kitchen will flood if there is a heavy rain. Good.

My brakes are repaired & I can pick up my car. I was able to reschedule my dental cleaning for October 25, made 4 months ago, to tomorrow. We had decided I would fly round-trip to LA for my appointment, rather than drive, so Rand & Ravi would not need to travel just to sit around in LA for an extra week. Dental cleaning can go forward tomorrow & I don't have to travel to LA after that. All good.

So I'm off to my morning shower, lunch to pick up my car. I'm feeling like I can get some work done today. No news really, but maybe you wanted to share my answered prayer and facts in support of just letting go of worries over things outside my control that interfere with being gratefully present.

Thank you for all your support,
Lina

October 14, 2022 ☺ *Doggie dentistry* ☺ Lina:

Tentative date for surgery. The surgeons are available & have requested the room for Wednesday, October 26. We will know next week whether it's approved and a go. I'm open on Wednesday the 25th.

Next Friday, I'll be seeing my oncologist, checking blood markers and such. I like calling the doctor's mine, rather than "the oncologist" for example because I like them and their care for my life is so personal. They feel like my very own. Although I feel so comfortable knowing I'm it God's

hands, it is something strange to me to be in another person's hands, especially because I don't know them at all. I can see some logical reasons for affection to arise from such dependency but the feeling is still strange, in a happy, secure way.

The trip back to LA is firm now as far as timing. If there are other changes, they will happen after we are there. The weeks at home have been nice. But I have not addressed many things that I intend to do. I expect to settle into the condo routine over the weeks that I anticipate will be needed. But, for now I must try to get ready for the home absence, and figure out whether & how to fit in a doggy dental cleaning with Smile Specialists in North Hollywood. We usually go there in March when we are in LA to see our tax guy. But Ravi is due for a cleaning and he does not like the guy who cleans his teeth in Oakland. We need to do some calculating to see whether we can coordinate my stuff. We will do what we can & the rest will have to wait.

That is the updated news for now. Love and gratitude to you.

Lina

October 17, 2022 ☺ *Rust never sleeps* ☺ Lina:

Three more days to take care of issues at home. It looks like rain in the Bay Area next week.

The prospect of rain has sparked my awareness that my van and the shed in the back yard both need attention because of rust. It really never sleeps. Last year we put a tarp over the shed because it had way too many holes to do anything else before the rain. It's been three years now that we put off replacing it until summer. My van has long strips of rust in the top, a common problem for this type of van, but the rust is a new thing this year. I have not examined it closely to see whether there are holes in the roof. And of course, I hope to work on the other home details. I'm feeling good today, so I expect I will get something done. I like to fix things.

We're off to LA on Thursday, just in time for my doctor's appointment on Friday morning. I have years of experience traveling long distances every two weeks, so I enjoy a road trip and I won't need to move equipment or do a sound check when we get there, like the old days on the road. Ravi also has his dental cleaning appointment Friday afternoon. I

think I left stuff in order when we left the condo last time.

I've been told that we will get approval for the October 26 surgery date this week & assume, for now, it's a go. After this Friday, we will have until the following Wednesday to get ready for the surgery & my return to the condo for rest & healing. I assume I will get up to the third floor bedroom level & remain there most of the time. Rand promises to feed me. I usually heal quickly, so 2 weeks should make a big difference. All assumptions are conditional, based on God's plan and approval.

I think my 5th round of chemo will be on November 14, the usual Monday. My Oncologist said it will be 2 weeks after surgery. So, I guess it could be on the Wednesday two weeks after. Then we will head home.

We had a nice breakfast of French toast with fresh blueberry compote (basket of blue berries, 1Tbsp. sugar & lime juice, boiled 4 minutes), and cinnamon. I'm up to 105 lbs. thanks to milk with meals. It's time to get moving, laundry & further preparation of a witness list for an upcoming hearing scheduled for mid-December, again subject to God's plan. I'm in prayer for a settlement in November.

I pray that you enjoy your work this week & that God's children who are around you share joy and belonging. Love,

Lina

October 19, 2022 ☞ *Constant prayer* ☞ Lina:

Departure is imminent. I got my necessary office work done in preparation for a mediation on November 4. I was anxious & praised God for answered prayer to get it done. Now I need to let it go, put it aside and do what I can to get ready for rain here & remember what to take with me back to the condo. I don't know why I get so busy at home. Ravi was up at 3:00 am so Rand & I were too & we are tired today. I think we will get the best of the weather while in our alternating locations. Rain will leave LA & cooling trend here will begin tomorrow.

Ravi has been a little shaky this week. I gave him his monthly glucosamine shot on Monday. I hope he will be improving soon as is usual. I have reasons to be in constant prayer and singing gratitude.

I haven't gotten confirmation that my surgery date is scheduled at the

Annals of modern healthcare

Precisely because we had been so impressed with Cedars-Sinai's performance hitherto, we were a little nonplussed when, en route to what we'd understood to be a firm surgery date, we were contacted a few hours out of Los Angeles and informed that the pieces hadn't come together. Basically, it had proven impossible to assemble the surgeons, the anesthesiologist, the operating room and sundry other components on the appointed day.

It appears that while back in the bad old days these various medical personnel would all be hospital employees, in today's brave new world such functionaries are just as likely to be independent "contractors," obviating the need for the "employer" to pay out costly benefit packages or make Social Security contributions. "Nobody ever said late-stage capitalism would be pretty."

I can imagine the negotiations: "Hello, TaskRabbit? Yeah, we need an anesthesiologist Thursday between two and seven. Uh-huh. Sure, yes, we can spring for the Uber..."

hospital, no new appointment alert. But, we are going to assume things will go as planned. I will see my oncologist Friday & have more information about my blood markers for cancer & my white blood cell status that shows whether my immune system is on the rebound.

I send my prayers and best wishes for your peace & fulfillment.

Lina

October 20, 2022 *Ch-ch-changes...* **Lina:**

Changes come.

I got the call from the surgeon's assistant as we passed Coalinga at about 2:00 pm, telling me that the other surgeons was not available Wednesday the 26th. The assistant is checking on Tuesday, the 25th, but doubted there was any operating room availability; maybe they could get the surgeon the next week and an operating room. New schedule: my surgery is not happening next Wednesday. Maybe Tuesday, maybe the week the 31st.

I feel at peace with the uncertainty & expect that the timing will be perfect whenever it is. I think it is another lesson in faith & may have learned it now. I hardly spent any energy resisting or worrying about it. I was on speaker phone so told Rand heard the news as he was driving. When I hung up, I said, "well maybe we will go home this weekend." He said, "Yep" and didn't seem to mind. I did not address the rust for the van or the shed, so maybe I can do that.

I heard a sermon this week about the Lord's Prayer, in which the speaker pointed out that we are instructed to pray "like this," rather than recite it as a mantra. So, the preacher went through the verses, including "Give us this day our daily bread." He said bread represented praying for God to provide for all our needs. It has been interesting to ponder a personal paraphrase for prayer for the phrases of the Lord's Prayer. I've particularly liked pondering the prayer for God's kingdom to come & His will being done on earth, imagining what it would be like. Thinking about the Lord's Prayer in this way connected with my faith in God's will. I look forward to building this practice as part of daily prayer.

We had a nice dinner (pork tenderloin, potato salad, zucchini & carrots, bread), prepared by Rand while I watched Thursday Night Football. It

was nice to get here safe & sound, perfect temperatures & clean, cozy digs. I'm grateful for all my needs being met, your prayers & God's answer for traveling mercies.

I see my doctor tomorrow morning & may find out what the plan may be and when. I hope that annoyance does no lead me into temptation & go the wrong way.

Updates will no doubt follow. Peace to you.

Lina

October 21, 2022 ☺ *Flexible, like Gumby* ☺ Lina:

Well no surgery next week. Maybe Wednesday, November 2. That week is the last window for surgery before more chemo. I'm flexible, like Gumby. In light of the schedule changes, we are going home, probably tomorrow until October 31 or November 1.

We did accomplish some good things. Ravi saw the dental hygienist for his scraping. He did fine.

I saw my oncologist & discussed what we will learn about the course of treatment following surgery based on what we will learn about the type of cancer cells and where the cancer is found through surgery. I may need to continue w/ the Avastin or take an oral medication, depending on the type of cancer cells. Meanwhile, he may recommend a reduction in some of the chemo agents. So, we wait and pray for healing and that I will have surgery on November 2, assuming "He's got this."

It's turkey tacos tonight. We are aiming for an early-ish departure around 10:00 a.m. tomorrow. I should be home in time to water the transplanted basil if it has not rained. I will see my oncologist on November 16 & have chemo 5 on the 17th, after surgery or maybe even if I don't have it by then. I'm told that the approval for the operating room time may be come on Monday but that Tuesday is definitely off the table. So I'm not expecting to need to return to LA before the 31st, which gives us 8 days back home. We can put the trash out this Monday and bring in the cans back in Tuesday, street cleaning day.

My brother is pursuing treatment through UCLA. It has a location near him in Ventura and it provides all the options for treatment. He has an

appointment with UCLA next week.

I trust that your weekend will be satisfying & productive. Love to you.

Lina

October 22, 2022 ☞ *Packing & unpacking* ☞ Lina:

We're back again. A bit chilly but I think there is supposed to be a warming trend. I think tonight is a perfect soup night. I'm also looking forward to completing a few projects that were left undone. This change in timing may just be perfect. But I'm being more specific in my prayers for approvals for operating room time & doctors' schedules, in accordance with God's will.

I probably will have nothing new to report until Monday. I have such an amazing team at Cedars. I saw the nutritionist after my oncologist on Friday. She said it was great that I'm maintaining my weight & told me what to expect after surgery as far as getting my digestion back to normal with a sequence of clear liquids, milk & soft stuff like apple sauce to solids. Then maybe I can gain weight.

I drove today & I continue to get stronger. We are getting quite good at packing & unpacking.

Love to you,

Lina

October 23, 2022 ☞ *Costco is my benchmark* ☞ Lina:

Rest & renewal.

It was a beautiful day. Monte gave a thought provoking sermon today about our wrestle with God to assert control when we don't have it. Monte's sharing of Anne Marie's insights that she shared on Monday's Race Matters discussion made me realize again how important fellowship is. Zoom Church is a wonderful option but does not satisfy for fellowship. Anne Marie, the prayers for so many of our congregation who are burdened and the sharing I've had recently show how important fellowship is.

I have been moved by friends who say they enjoyed or felt inspired by what I've shared in my journal. I want to share but I don't usually talk to my friends about God if they don't believe in God. So many may not know



Point Isabel, the legendary Bay Area off-leash paradise.

about my faith. I don't want to argue about God or preach. I respect that we cannot define the truth of God by our construct, even though it seems we often get caught up in assertions that our way is the only way to follow God's will. Judy Gough posited that God is growing me to share. My faith sustains me & allows me to accomplish some things I would not attempt. I can't explain the mechanism. I'm grateful though.

I used to be a closet Christian. But over time, I've grown much more able to understand and explain my faith & relationship with God and Jesus. I don't have to be able explain why Matthew reportedly said, Jesus withered a fig tree instantly because Jesus was annoyed that it didn't have any figs on it. But I can look at Mark. Questions abound. I like to explore the questions & scripture, pray for my daily bread & accept thy will be done, or I try to more often than times past. But the important thing, I know, is to seek. And the desire to seek does not seem to be only from my own initiative. I'm glad I have it & glad to share it.

I got my test results today for the blood draw Friday & learned what the CA-125 is. CA stands for cancer antigen. It is the blood marker for my kind of cancer. It has gone from the 2000s in July to 4 on Friday. Three weeks ago it was 80 something. So, I'm still on the right trajectory. The rest of my blood test results looked good to me, within normal ranges. That helps me feel more calm about the interval between the chemo & surgery on November 2, maybe.

I went to Costco & demonstrated again my improved endurance & strength. Costco is my benchmark. After I got gas, while Rand & Ravi walked at Point Isabel, I went to the Point Isabel parking to pick them up. Ravi had decided to take a long walk, all the way to the other end of park, where the bridge is. So I walked to meet them & walked back to the car. Then we went back to Costco and I headed in while Rand sat with Ravi in the car.

I did not even think about using the scooter. I got my 10 packs of large Kleenex boxes, then wrestled the cart out to the parking lot, through a planter at the end of the sidewalk because a tow truck, stretched across the parking lot between me and my car, blocked my way. I got the upper-body workout pushing the cart onto the sidewalk & dragging it through the wood chips in the planter area where the sidewalk ended.

On faith

"I don't usually talk to my friends about God if they don't believe in God."

I've mentioned before that I didn't, and don't, subscribe to Lina's Christian faith – I'd place myself near the atheist side of the agnostic spectrum, held back from that terminus owing to some substance-induced "mystical" episodes in my youth (which were nevertheless not remotely consistent with Christian cosmology). However, as I've assembled these entries I am impressed anew by how her faith clearly sustained her throughout the years of her ordeal.

We understood one another comfortably, I think. She never sought to convert me; I made no attempt to undermine her beliefs (she liked the concept of "non-overlapping magisteria"). Her community of co-religionists provided an important component of support during the years we here consider; I hope that my necessarily secular shoring up sustained her equally.

I'm definitely even stronger than the last time I battled Costco.

We came home to the smell of lamb & chorizo stew in the crock pot & enjoyed a nice dinner. I had milk to pad the calories. It was a beautiful day for renewal.

Prayers for you for the coming week that you are healed and have the peace of Christ to sustain you.

Lina

October 24, 2022 ☞ *A little too ambitious* ☞ **Lina:**

Just because I can doesn't mean I should. Too ambitious with the shopping cart workout.

I had aching neck & shoulder muscles that gave me a headache this morning. I haven't used those muscles for too long & I need to go more gently in exercise. Tylenol has beaten back the headache.

Correction on my last post: Surgery is projected to be November 2, not February when I hope to be recovered from it & out in the world again. Approval of the operating room time is still pending.

Many projects are underway for this unexpected week at home. I hope to attend the Race Matters Zoom discussion tonight. Laundry, grocery shopping, rust abatement & yard stuff are lined up as tasks. But, I will pace myself better. I'm glad the rain hasn't started yet, probably waiting until I wash the car.

Love to you,
Lina

October 26, 2022 ☞ *"Last night's chop"* ☞ **Rand:**

Here it is!

October 28, 2022 ☞ *Zeno's surgery* ☞ **Lina:**

Closer to confirmation, but still up in the air.

I'm in communication with the surgery coordinator & she says we have the doctors & approval of the room, but need to confirm staffing for the surgery. I interpret that as an almost possible confirmation. There seem



Rand's grotesquely-stuffed porkchop: double-thick cut from Piedmont Grocery, pouched and stuffed with ground pork sausage, chopped shallots, diced sautéed mushrooms, dried cranberries, pine nuts, crumbled feta or bleu cheese and barbecue sauce.

to be some new wrinkles, like a COVID test that is required before admission to surgery. The surgery coordinator leaves at 4:30 and is gone for the weekend. So, I almost certain that it's possible I will have surgery on November 2. But, I many not know when I leave for L.A.

We plan to leave for L.A on Monday morning around 9:00 a.m. Rand's brother will probably ride with us to L.A for dog sitting (assuming surgery Nov. 2) & then fly back to Oakland late next week & drive home to Santa Cruz to undertake dog sitting duties for a friend the next Tuesday. Schedule coordination certainly is complicated.

Rand & I got the shed covered yesterday. Maybe I will get to the top of the van. I planned to deal with the rusted van roof today, but Ravi had his acupuncture appointment this morning & we are all tired today. I certainly might possibly do it tomorrow or Sunday. The rain will come soon we hope.

Fortunately, I'm blessed with answered prayer for God's loving to hold me steady. It changes my view from an otherwise frustrating lack of clarity and criticism to one of compassion & humor. I feel the gratitude & trust God's timing daily. I'm trying to do my part without getting in the way.

I hope you all have a fulfilling weekend & see the love around you. Thank you.

Lina

October 31, 2022 ❧ *Rand's reluctance* ❧ Lina:

Ready to pack up the car & head out. Just a few more details to address. The scheduling person at Cedars said to call her Monday morning at 8:30 to confirm staffing has been secured for the OR. I got voice mail. So, we will pack up & go around 10:00 after I shower & paint the top of the van on the side where I applied the rust treatment. That means convincing Rand to drag the ladder across the street again, a task in itself. He does not favor dealing with labor-intensive maintenance in advance. I'm looking ahead thinking, it will be much harder after the roof is leaking. But then again, I can be convinced to pretend it isn't happening or to accept that it will have to wait. I'll let you know. I take comfort in having observed that there are no apparent holes that go through the metal yet.



Here's Lina endeavoring to rustproof the roof of her horrible Dodge van. The Crumbling Manse™ is visible behind her at left.

OK. Task 2 completed. The rust on the roof of the van is treated for the time being. I'm an hour behind now, but it is worth the peace of mind.

No word from Cedars yet. But, after my morning shower we will probably be heading out.

Best to all,
Lina



The fabulous sunset.

October 31, 2022 ☾ *Shit's getting real* ☾ Lina:

We made it to the Valley before dark & caught a fabulous sunset. Traveling mercies. Gratitude.

Surgery is a go, Wednesday at 1:00, check-in at 11:00, so no rush hour commute. I got the call confirming Wednesday as we drove, some place past Firebaugh, next gas 34 miles.

We had mailed our ballots and hung around Oakland until noon, waiting to see if we would get the confirmation. We had lunch, yummy fish burritos, on Piedmont Avenue, and hit the road.

When we got off the freeway, we stopped at Whole Foods to get food to cook for dinner, tiki marsala, brown rice & broccolini. I will sleep well having done my tasks of covering the shed & rust abatement on the van. Tomorrow, I will pack for my stay at the hospital. Back in mid-September, I got a new robe & PJs at JC Penneys, 70% off, when I thought surgery was happening in September. I will pack my snacks, bed jacket, and some good reading material. It's for real now.

God's perfect timing has allowed for help with Ravi & pleasant travel with Ravi, Rand & his brother.

Love to you,
Lina

November 2, 2022 ☾ *Pre-op* ☾ Lina:

I woke up at 4:00 a.m., thinking about food. My pre-surgery instructions are no food 8 hours before surgery. The instructions for clear liquids was contradictory, either none 8 hours before or that clear liquids are OK up to 2 hours before.

I had decided last night to have something light before 5 a.m., including

my 1/2 cup of coffee and lots of water. Rand & his brother cautioned me to be conservative & go with the cautious route. But, after all these years, I know my body pretty well, and I'm pretty willful, as they know. Well, I got up at 4:30, had 1/4 cup of plain yogurt with a tablespoon of blueberry reduction, 1 teaspoon of granola and my 1/2 cup of coffee. It feels good in my stomach. Then I went back to bed thinking the coffee will kick in later. But, the brain had already started running, "what did I forget to pack," etc. Then I realized the gratitude & began to thank God for all my blessings, God's strength holding me, modern medicine, my doctors, family & friends.

As I pondered, I realized that I felt this big smile that I recognized as unbidden joy. I've noticed this feeling being present these days. I'm grateful, but I still wonder why is this. Then my mind wanders to how to pray and the influences that have brought me to this space in my life.

I experienced the lasting influence of how prayer is done in Alabama, when my now dear friend and former bandmate & I stayed with his parents during a break. As we prepared to head out on a cold, icy road to the next gig, they prayed for us. They were Pentecostal. I still don't know the differences between most Protestant doctrines, but I adopted their style of prayer. It started with "thank you Lord for x." For example, "thank you Lord for keeping Lina & Bryan safe as they travel to x." Their style assumed that God answered the prayer already. I like that notion, although I haven't worked out whether it also assumes having asked for the thing in prayer.

So, today I thanked God for answering my prayer for healing and a successful surgery & for guiding my doctors. Uttering the praise, and even thinking it, just makes me smile & feel joy at believing my prayers are answered. Then, I think of all those who have and are praying for me and sending loving thoughts. I feel so blessed & I believe that, with regard to asking the Lord in prayer, God has heard and answered the prayers from my Christian, Muslim, Jewish and other-seeker supporters. Thanks to you all, or y'all in Alabaman. So, today I'm praying according to my Pentecostal model. Thank you Lord for answering my prayers.

My surgeon called yesterday to check in. Dr. Manuel is an enthusiastic fellow. He asked how I was doing. I told him I was fine; that I was playing



"Dog Park," the game. Fun, but not a patch on the real thing. (Especially from the standpoint of an actual dog, I'd think.)

a board game, Dog Park, with Rand & Greg, & feeling calm. He exclaimed, “that’s great, exactly the kind of thing you should do.” He continued with encouraging reports, “I’ve seen the scans, the tumors are practically gone. We’re going to take good care of you, just remove the remainder.” He answered my questions & projected that I would do very well after surgery, maybe be out in four days. It was good to hear. Still there is that part of me that doesn’t want to get her hopes up or thinks “is it arrogant to assume?” But then, why not enjoy the blessing of faith?

Maybe Dr. M’s predictions encouraged my optimism, but the reason, I think, is faith in answered prayer. He’s got this, as always, according to His will. So, it is a good day already, now just past 6:00. We will head to hospital around 9:30, for the 11:00 a.m. check-in at Cedars LA.

I or Rand will let y’all know when I’m post-op conscious this evening.

Love,

Lina

November 2, 2022 ☺ *Running late* ☺ Rand:

It is a truth universally acknowledged that any human endeavor undertaken according to a schedule is subject to slippage (except the departure of an airline flight when one happens to be running late), and so it has been today, with Lina’s gurney having only just now been wheeled off to the theatre of operations—and they might need a medical amphitheatre to accommodate all the attending personnel who dropped by to introduce themselves during the two hours we passed in lighthearted banter and thumb-twiddling there in pre-op.

The Cedars-Sinai complex here in West Hollywood is vast. I’m about to head back to one of the cavernous parking structures, one of which must be where we parked the Lexus, to stash L’s kit bag, and thence somewhere to score a bit of grub. Lina probably won’t be out of surgery until seven PDT or thereabouts, but C-S promises to share any (boring, it is hoped) developments with me via text as the afternoon wanes. All your good vibes, secular and otherwise, have been much appreciated.

November 2, 2022 ☺ *From the horse’s mouth* ☺ Rand:

Just spoke with the head surgeon: “It’ll be another forty-five minutes.

She's fine. She had a great response."

November 3, 2022 ☞ *On the powers of caffeine* ☞ Rand:

On the restorative powers of caffeine, and other stories:

I sprang—well, rolled—out of bed just six hours after gratefully collapsing into it, and after two cups of Folgers hi-test I am ready to wrestle with whatever the world might throw at me today, which of course will be as nothing compared to what our patient will be wrestling with on this first full day (of five or six, it is contemplated) of hospitalization post-op, and the nursing staff will deny her, I fear, the solace of a cuppa joe. The prayerful among the regulars might want to mention that in today's dispatches.

It was, as I have intimated, a very long day. We arrived on time for "check-in" at 11:00 a.m., with "the procedure" set to begin at 1:00. This had been pushed back to 3:00, sundry tests and preps being undertaken in the interval, by the time she was wheeled into the operating room. Thereafter retiring to a waiting area* down the corridor, I passively monitored her progress throughout the afternoon and into the night by means of cryptic, albeit encouraging "do not reply" text messages from the medics. The main event having been wound up at around 7:00, the surgeon himself came out to brief me, said that everything had gone "very well," added that the ancillary "HIPEC" procedure would require another three-quarters of an hour before everything was stitched up. At eight: "The procedure is almost finished. Please stand by." At nine: "The procedure is complete. You will be contacted when the patient is ready for visitors." In the end, I felt obliged to make as much of a nuisance of myself as, consistent with the magisterial courtesy that forms the bedrock of my affect, I could summon forth, and was at last, somewhere within seething distance of midnight, vouchsafed a hospital room number. I parked myself outside

**The waiting area was spacious and comfortable enough—the corresponding facilities at Oakland Kaiser are by comparison decidedly on the spartan side—but I could have done without the wall-mounted television at one end of the room, the unit tuned to what was apparently a "Family Feud" marathon for most of the afternoon. At one point, alone in the room, I fumbled around the back and sides of the screen, searching for means by which to turn it down or turn it off, but these functions appeared to have been the sole province of a remote control, and I thought it would be awkward to be caught rifling through the vacant nurse's station in search of this. [Footnote as in the original CB entry]*

of Room 8804, at which Lina presently arrived on a barge rowed by half a dozen medical staff, there to be manhandled from gurney to bed—as gently as possible, I do not doubt, but with some attendant discomfort to judge from her audible protests from within the room.

I was permitted entry at last. Lina wanted her two bags of gear brought up from the car; the nurses, while not forbidding this, discouraged the notion very strongly, and I made the executive decision that our patient, who looked to be planning to press the painkiller button as frequently as the programmed interval would permit, and whose lucidity was not just then in tip-top form, would probably not be posting lengthy tomes here from her iPad during the night. We'll see what arrangement we might come to when I visit her later this morning.

All due tribute to the gang at Cedars-Sinai, who got the job done, if not in “concierge” style, with at least as much dispatch and efficiency as a body may expect from The Finest Healthcare System in the World, and certainly better than we appeared poised to receive from Kaiser in distant Oakland. We are all hoping that by the close of treatment before year's end, Lina will be en route to her former fettle and vigor (or “piss and vinegar,” if you like) and poised to enter 2023 in comfort and cheer. Tribute as well to brother Greg, who has heroically held down the fort and tended the geriatric pooch, in Noirthridge (a typo, but I like it) during our lengthy absences.

November 3, 2022 ❖ Post-op ❖ Rand:

Regarding specificity in supplications to the Almighty; other developments:

Back at Cedars-Sinai early in the afternoon, where Lina mentioned that she and her roomie (they're working on providing L with private quarters) were both served coffee this morning, so kudos to all who sent petitions skyward. I wish I could report that it had been good, hot, hearty java, but both patients report that it was tepid and weak, so maybe next time try to score some Jamaica Blue Mountain or kopi luwak (I don't pretend to be a theologian, so it's possible that these matters are ordered differently on the cosmic plane).

Lina is still feeling pretty rocky in the wake of the operation. The doctors



Our patient, post-op. She did not post this one online.

are requiring the roommate to get up and walk around, but L has been granted a dispensation to remain abed for another day. Between exhaustion and the drugs she was pretty drowsy by the time she suggested, once we had between us sorted out some recharging issues with her personal electronics, that I head back to the Valley and attend to the dog, whose fundament has looked dodgy the past couple of retrievals. The fun never ends. I thought I was headed for the San Diego Freeway, but the lady in the telephone instead sent me on a merry chase over canyon roads via a route I could not have devised on my own and could probably not retrace to save my life, but which did in time deliver me to the base camp here. I have to assume that "the 405" was as apocalyptically jammed up as the weekday commute typically has it.

The surgeon dropped by to tell us that Lina's innards looked spectacular, that to all visible appearances the chemo has delivered to the enemy tissue a salutary and thorough thrashing: "We could see where the tumors were, but no evidence of anywhere they are." Of course, the laboratory will have to weigh in once they've had a look at the harvested tissues, but so far, you know, so good. Also, even though her intestines have been temporarily shocked, or rather cooked, into outright paralysis (sorry, TMI?) by HIPEC, this is a transient condition that will abate once she starts hobbling around the South Tower. And the viscera themselves, according to the medic, looked "fabulous" (I get the sense that this guy loves it when he can deliver good news), which is encouraging because there had been some concern, as formerly with liver and lungs (false alarms! yay!), that the rebel cells might have established redoubts in those precincts. Apparently nyet, nicht, nada and huzzah.

November 4, 2022 ☞ Possible slow news day ☞ Rand:

Unless Lina is feeling sufficiently chipper to roll her own posts over the coming hours, her co-author may be tied up in a veterinary contretemps today, possibly confining him to the Valley, far from Cedar's distant precincts. My presence is of course putatively good for morale, and for such homely functions as sorting through her collection of data and power cables, but if I can't make it to L's bedside I feel confident that the ministrations of the very attentive nursing staff there in West Hollywood will answer the occasion.



A bouquet commissioned from the Pacific Northwest.

November 5, 2022 ❧ *Dispatch from North Hollywood* ❧ Rand:

Back at the bewildering Cedars-Sinai campus (I really must remember that sack of breadcrumbs next time), in Lina's new, private room. She says "hi" to all, and wants everyone to know that she's been physically detached from the various needles and monitoring devices that had her tethered abed, and that she's started back on solid food. True, it's hospital food, and accordingly not likely to make the Guide Michelin any time soon, but the very fact that she can consume it suggests that her viscera have begun to get their mojo back.

"Is there anything you'd like to say to your many fans, Lina?"

"Thanks for all your cards and prayers. I'll write when I'm able."

In other news, Ravi seems to be feeling better after his veterinary appointment, and is not, at least as of this morning, exhibiting the symptoms that sent us sprinting to secure a professional examination. L is greatly cheered at the news.

November 7, 2022 ❧ *Back to base camp* ❧ Rand:

Cedars-Sinai will be turning Lina out this afternoon, and provided I can find my way to the discharge platform – threading the labyrinthine Cedars complex is always a challenge – I will be there to retrieve her and transport us back here to Northridge, trailing clouds of glory. In the interim, Greg and I will spruce up the premises, which have become a tad disordered in the absence of our major-domo. There will probably be no further dispatches for another eight hours. My advice is to use a portion of the time reflecting on the fact that today marks half a century since Nixon's re-election. How can that be??

November 7, 2022 ❧ *I'm here* ❧ Lina:

It's been a rough few days, but I'm being discharged this afternoon. I have a new decorative scar. I'm so grateful for the outpouring of love, the care by my doctors & so many others, Rand & his brother, praise God for all these blessings.

I'm having trouble eating much. I expect to eat more as I heal. The pain is much better. I can walk & get up unaided. The prospective is positive.

The surgeon said the chemo had eradicated the tumors. No visible ones anywhere. The HIPEC is expected to get the rest. I am scheduled for another round of chemo in a couple weeks & hoping that will be the last. I hope to be able to help out for Thanksgiving at CAPC & see my dear friends there.

Blessings to you,
Lina

November 7, 2022 ☺ *Good night to all* ☺ Rand:

Lina's tucked in upstairs following a long drive home – the Cedars discharge process proved a tad dilatory, and the roads, both surface and elevated, were on the crowded and sluggish side – and I will join her shortly, since I must needs rise before the sun so that Greg (who has done yeoman, nay, heroic service as support staff here at Firebase Northridge) can catch an early flight to his home precincts. I'll be entertaining in the morning, perhaps, but now I'm heading for the upper floor and my stitched-up spouse.

November 7, 2022 ☺ *News day slow and damp* ☺ Rand:

Lina has been resting – well, not “comfortably” at this stage, but she is bearing up well – on the upper floor most of this rainy day, although she made it down to the dining level (and back upstairs again under her own power) for a brief lunch of lentil soup. Greg has returned safely home to Santa Cruz, after not having flown since the Before Time until today. The trip to Burbank Airport in the dark and under heavy downpour did not conduce to distracted driving: at one point on I-5, boxed in by trucks, we hit a flooded underpass so deep that the water nearly o'ertopped the gunwales, but we Careaga men build extra time into these things: had the Lexus stalled out, we could have walked, or at least waded, to the airport in time for check-in.

As intimated, Lina is still enduring some post-op discomfort, which is scarcely surprising. If *The Bride of Frankenstein* had been made pre-Code, or today, the makeup people probably would have rendered on Elsa Lanchester's torso something like the dramatic black stitchery that the Bride of Careaga now sports. It may be that instead of remaining here



Ravi, early in the walk.



Later in the walk, usually on a heavily-traveled paved surface.

another dozen days, we'll head north again by the weekend, since the delay in conducting the operation will probably push back the next chemotherapy until after Thanksgiving. We're still waiting for clarification on that.

Poor Ravi seems bored out of his doggie skull. Home at The Crumbling Manse™ he at least has his stations of the cross, his accustomed spots in each of three rooms and the vestibule, and can move from one to another at will and unassisted. I do get him out and around the neighborhood and the park at the end of the street, but he doesn't enjoy going out in the rain, which has been abundant today, so I've been obliged to keep a weather eye open and take speedy advantage of any breaks in the wet. His recent, um, performances follow a by now predictable pattern, beginning in the style of Brâncusi and finishing up as Jackson Pollack. However, we have received word from the local vet we consulted on Friday that some transient symptoms of concern were not reflected in any of the battery of costly tests that were ordered, so there's that.

Apart from the fact that I neglected to pack a jacket, I'm enjoying the rain (any patriotic Californian should). The air is bracing and seemingly packed with "negative ions," which reliably lift my spirits. Lina, alas, will not be in a position to enjoy these for some days yet, so the regulars here might want to add some electrons, if you happen to have any lying around the house, to the usual consignments of thoughts, prayers and vibes.

November 9, 2022 ☽ *After the rain* ☽ Lina:

It's a beautiful, sparkling day after the rain. Gratitude comes easy.

I'm on the mend, feeling stronger than yesterday & looking forward to cooking soon so Rand will not need to do everything & we can improvise a diverse menu. Rand made a fabulous miso soup last night, w/ chicken dumplings, carrots, zucchini & 2 eggs stirred in at the end. I made it down stairs to the dining area. Ravi beamed at having the pack together on the same floor & melted into his pillow.

The schedule is settling into place also. My next dates in Northridge are November 28 & 29, for an office visit & chemo 5, respectively. We will head home when I feel able, probably by the weekend. I've been able to back off on the pain meds & feel like my brain is working again. I dislike the Oxy side effects. Can't imagine why some people like them, but there are different kinds of pain.

“Thanks” is insufficient to convey my gratitude for your comments, love, prayers & caring. But thank you.

Lina

November 10, 2022 ☽ *Fresh air* ☽ Lina:

It's only the leftovers picture, but yum. It's another beautiful day & Rand is enjoying the Valley warm weather now. He & Greg celebrated, while cleaning up for my return, by opening the windows & letting the breeze blow through. Simple pleasures.

It is looking like rain in the Bay Area on Saturday. Not a lot in Oakland, but travel is contraindicated. Looks like Sunday will be a good travel day. I'm so relieved that I had the time & help for the shed & van before we left & before the rain hit shortly thereafter.

I'm going to have to get back to a root beer float to boost the calories. Small portions are all I can manage so far, but I don't like to hammer the sugar either. Still milk has list some of its appeal since that was about all I could manage in the hospital. Despite the loving care, I'm so glad to be outta there. I slept well last night for the first time since surgery.

A dear friend from law school is stopping by today. She lives in W. LA/ Hollywood. I don't need to entertain & she's bringing Thanksgiving cookies w/o baking powder, although she says they are mostly for Rand.

I'm continuing to improve, much less pain & the digestive tract is starting to perk better. Love & peace to you.

Lina

November 11, 2022 ☽ *Holiday weekend* ☽ Lina:

Veteran's Day. Makes Friday seem like a Saturday. I expect, we will be confused about what day it is until at least Monday.

I'm still struggling to eat enough because of nausea. My friend visited yesterday w/ “goodies” not cookies, which, given her aversion to sugar would have been strange. She brought turkey, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes & brussels sprouts for lunch. It was very nice. But by evening, I could not manage to eat more. Fortunately, the turkey lunch was substantial enough to carry me through. I managed breakfast and lunch today in



“Leftovers...but yum.”

small portions, mostly liquids, including a protein drink that was good as those things go, banana-strawberry.

Rand is busy with dinner based on lamb sirloin chops, which sounds great. I think I can do them justice tonight. We still plan to head North on Sunday.

I have not been outside since I arrived back to the condo & the weather is beautiful. I stuck my head out this afternoon & made a note to self promising to at least walk on the patio tomorrow. I'm taking it easy, waiting for a perk in my energy, which I know will come soon. Meanwhile, Tylenol is my friend. I trust that you all had a good Friday holiday. Maybe you can see snow in the mountains. There is so much beauty every day, it's hard to keep up. Enjoy your weekend with the blessings of friendship and a future of joyful surprise.

Love,
Lina

November 12, 2022 ☽ *Basking in the glow* ☽ Lina:

Ahh, the weekend. Somehow I sense the relative quiet of the weekend even though I'm inside on a quiet street & neighbors are home making more noise than weekdays. I have not met them & it is strange how people live in the Valley never meeting those living 10 feet away unless there is an emergency. Then, people pull together & experience the blessing of community that goes missed so often.

I am basking in the glow of a hot shower, trimmed nails & half a cup of various emollients & costly cosmetic preservatives. My sutures are healing nicely & I put on street clothes for the first time since the return in anticipation of walking outside in the sunshine before 5 p.m., assuming I can maintain my energy level. It's already past 1:00 p.m., & I need to get the crockpot loaded with boneless chicken thighs, curry spices, onion, celery, carrots & garlic if we hope to eat before 7:00.

Rand is doing laundry as we prepare for tomorrow's departure. I probably could travel today, but not drive. So, I think tomorrow is a go, although Rand likely will do the driving. I'm not ready for any Costco runs yet.

This amazing Bird of Paradise is from my friend's garden. Enjoy the weekend beauties, and for that matter, the beauties.

Lina



Emollient for the soul: "Bird of Paradise."

November 13, 2022 ☞ *This (c)old house* ☞ **Lina:**

Brrrrr. The heat has been off & it's cold in here. We are home again though, safe & sound. Traveling Mercies. Ravi is very happy to be home per usual.

Rand is at Whole Foods getting some dinner & fresh bread. I was able to drive a bit, but a late start & long lunch stop had us in after dark at 6:15. It was a beautiful ride but pretty heavy traffic in a few spots. We have a nice long 2 week stay, yay. Love to you all.

Lina

November 15, 2022 ☞ *God's perfect timing* ☞ **Lina:**

Last year's garden is still holding out for spring. I have about 5 yellow zucchini growing, along with a few left over jalapeños, 2 strawberry bushes, what looks like some lettuce and unbidden mushrooms. The backyard promises to be fun this spring. I'm looking forward to it.

I've just stayed pretty much in bed the past two days except to eat. I did make turkey tacos last night, but Rand had to cut up the tomatoes, lettuce, avocado, & onions. I defrosted & heated up the leftover taco meat from our last visit, grated the cumin-cheddar & cooked the tortillas. It was a good family effort & gave more than it took.

Rand's nephew & wife are attending a conference in SF, so we are planning to go out to dinner. I think I can venture out for a while & I'm looking forward to dinner at the Berkeley City Club. Rand's nephew is an architect, his wife is a landscape architect. They live in Boston and it's been 7 years since we saw them here in the Bay Area. I expect that they are enjoying the relative defrost. It's great that the timing worked out. It was looking like we would be in LA today, but then God's perfect timing. I watch and smile.

We also need to shop for provisions, groceries & vitamins. So, hope to accomplish that today. If we can figure out how to remove the cover on our rear license plate, we really should get our registration sticker on there. It expired in September. Such is the trivia calling out for attention when we get. Easy peasey. BTW, Judy Gough's birthday is November 17, Thursday. I'm off to the morning shower. It will take some doing to dress for dinner. I better start early. Love to you all.

Lina



Lina enjoyed working in the backyard garden, taking particular pride in the vegetables she cultivated in her "raised beds." I'm afraid I've not done right by her since she left us, and the yard is (as of mid-2025) an impassable disgrace.



Dinner at the Berkeley City Club, which we joined after the nearby Bellevue Club folded following a couple of decades' poor management. Visiting from Cambridge MA are Mark Careaga, my eldest nephew, and Alison Crosbie, his wife.



"Clings to my head like it's painted on. Nope, not my look."

November 16, 2022 ☞ *Everyone had more hair than me* ☞ Lina:

Three layers & I was ready to brave the fresh air last night. I'm still having trouble moving. It hurts, but I just can't deal with the various gastric problems that follow pain meds other than Extra Strength Tylenol. I can have that every six hours and that manages things.

We had a lovely dinner. The halibut was yuuuumy. Mark and Allison were a delight & everyone had more hair than me. I'll catch up though. My cap kept my head warm. The wig was way too severe. I cut the bangs, but could not do anything to soften the edges. It's dark & clings to my head like it's painted on. Nope, not my look.

I had a big breakfast & leftovers for lunch, halibut, smashed potatoes, and assorted hints of vegetables like asparagus & tomatoes. I picked out the peppers. I don't get peppers on a mild fish. A root beer float is sounding good, but I'm too full right now. My capacity is getting larger though. Frequent small meals will take me there.

No other news. Just slow progress, staying warm, and feeling grateful for the amazing progress.

Love,
Lina

November 19, 2022 ☞ *The slow job of healing* ☞ Lina:

The slow job of healing. I've just been lying around for the past few days, with my evening walk around the center of the house as meager exercise. I think I will just take my time. My suture is looking good, no fever, no negative indications. So, I think it is just going to take a bit longer to begin walks outside.

Thanksgiving is just around the corner. I plan to make slow cooked turkey thighs. They have all the holiday flavor & don't take much to get underway. Rand's brother Greg is coming for Thanksgiving & maybe we will catch a traditional movie for the holiday weekend.

I think of everyone at College Avenue, my church family, who is pulling together to prepare & serve our Thanksgiving meal, feeding 100 to 200 people a home cooked meal for about 30 years. It is quite amazing for our small church. The local community helps too with donations and

volunteering. Piedmont Grocery gives two dozen packages of Parker-house Rolls & a case of butter. Safeway & TJs usually donate too. The need seems to be growing each year. It is special, from the 6:00 a.m. decorating to the clean-up before folks go home. Thanks to you all for being an example of love. People really are full of it, love of course, and don't often have the where with all to show it in a big way. But then, receiving even a little love can be very big.

Rand is cooking again tonight. He made Bachelor Casserole last night, yum. It's like a tuna noodle casserole, but w/ chicken & mushrooms. He used to make it as a bachelor & touted its benefit as, "you can eat it all week." That charm is questionable, but it does ease the nightly cooking. I go for every other day & it does not last all week.

I trust you are all safe and warm over the holidays. Love you,
Lina

November 22, 2022 ☽ *Holding pattern* ☽ Lina:

It's three weeks tomorrow since surgery & I think I may have made a transition today. Pain is at a new low & I think I'm more alert today. The past 3 days have been a holding pattern. I went shopping w/ Rand on Sunday. Then, I was exhausted until today.

From my Zoom vantage, it was a great sermon Sunday about seeing the face of God in our daily lives. What a blessing the Zoom access is.

My brother, David, reports that he is likely to seek proton therapy at Loma Linda to treat his prostate cancer. He is undergoing more testing since the doctors identified a BRCA 2 gene in other testing. They don't know whether the test results are an expression of his cancer or a genetic condition that means a likelihood that his cancer will grow more quickly. We are learning as we fumble forward.

Rand & I are heading south Sunday for my doctor's appointment on Monday. Tuesday, my surgeon removes the staples that run about 12" up my belly. I'm scheduled for chemo 5 Tuesday morning. We can hope to return home before the following weekend, maybe Thursday. I'm looking forward to the absence of the metal staples.

There were so many needs expressed in the prayers on Sunday &

"Bachelor casserole"

When Lina merged our households in spring of 1996, moving into my rather charmless rented upstairs flat – "Locksey Hovel," she christened it – she was appalled at my practice of consuming the same suppers on consecutive nights. Bachelor casserole, as I called it, was one such staple. There's not a recipe as these things are understood. To boiled noodles I add in no particular quantities shredded chicken, caramelized onions, sautéed mushroom, grated cheese, sour cream, lots of curry powder. Atop the mix I spread more cheese and then a liberal coating of crumbled potato chips. Salt-laden, highly fattening, highly unhealthy, the *ne plus ultra* of irresponsible comfort food. I find myself eating a great deal of it since Lina's death.



The blooms just keep on coming.

expressions of gratitude. Chick is such an amazing expression of faith & strength. I cannot imagine the strength it took for his recovery from a heart transplant. Truly amazing. I wonder how & why some choose to try to manage such difficult struggles in life by themselves. We are willful, but that seems to be the way we are made.

I am grateful for answered prayers for God to heal me & destroy the cancer. I'm working as support staff, taking B-complex & eating from the bounty. I made lentil, lime & lamb stew last night & cooked some Piedmont G meatloaf w/ traditional veggies the night before. So, Rand got a bit of a break. Greg arrives tomorrow & we will enjoy crockpot turkey thighs w/ the fixins on Thursday.

Happy Thanksgiving to all & prayers for a day filled with shared love,
Lina

November 25, 2022 ☽ *Après Thanksgiving* ☽ Lina:

Thanksgiving was a wonderful day of over-eating & high calorie intake. We had all the stuff: turkey, stuffing, green beans, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, soft rolls, and lots of gravy. Yum. Greg brought the pumpkin pie & I ate that too, with vanilla ice cream. The Careaga men had whipped cream. Traditionalists. I had some phone calls with a few family members and was glad to stay home indoors without having to travel.

My sister reports that my brother Bill was sick after his return from 3 weeks in Australia for work. He traveled after he felt better, but seems to have shared his illness with our step-dad while staying with him in Las Vegas. My sister's youngest daughter, in Pittsburg, is waiting to see if she will share in the COVID that her husband got after their recent travels. He was quite sick, but is on the mend. The reports were enough to discourage our idea of catching a movie today, given the likelihood of high density patronage.

We are probably heading south tomorrow, Saturday, because we expect Sunday traffic going to LA will be a crush. That's another reason that a movie may be contraindicated. My brain is not quite in pack up mode yet, but we want to get an early start to arrive before dark. I have a pile of laundry to address before we go and I should do some work, just in case my case does not settle as expected.

I am feeling better though. The past two days has brought a noticeable improvement in my healing. I'm a bit more energetic and the pain has receded. I have only needed a single Tylenol once or twice a day. I think my liver is appreciating the break. Still, I don't think I can do a hearing that is scheduled to begin December 13.

That is all for our plans and/or intentions. It is a beautiful day out there. Maybe we could do a matinee with masks. Maybe a walk. I got a mile in for each of the last two days. That's not great (I was doing 2-3 miles before surgery) but it's better than the 1/2 mile I had been walking around the house since. It takes effort to get going, but I always feel better when I walk.

Best wishes for your lovely weekend. We will be in LA when and if the rain starts on Monday. They are supposed to get rain on Thursday down south, so we will modify our travel plans for our return home in order to avoid the chance of snow on the Grapevine.

I see my oncologist & surgeon on Monday & Tuesday, respectively. Chemo 5 happens on Tuesday & staple removal too. Then it's home as soon as I feel well enough & resolve other possible matters which may arise.

Love,
Lina

November 27, 2022 ❖ *The Valley in autumn* ❖ Lina:

Back in the Valley safe & sound. Rand likes November here. It is a good time of year with temperatures in the 70s.

The drive was rough. We thought we would beat the Sunday traffic. But we got a late start, 1:15 pm, owing to my morning nausea, general digestive tract issues and many others apparently had the same idea. I drove for an hour & had to surrender the reins to Rand. He did the heavy lifting, including bumper to bumper traffic from the Grapevine until the Lancaster turn off, about 50 miles from our destination. I'm glad to have Sunday as a buffer before I have to go to the doctor.

It was a rough travel day, but we made it safely to the condo at about 7:30 , as always, grateful for a safe arrival. I could barely eat my piece

“A long period of remission”

Dr. Ponec was never high on HIPEC, and unlike Dr. Manual, the surgeon, was not disposed to hold forth the prospect of Lina’s long-term survival, but he did think that it was reasonable for us to look forward to an interval of remission lasting a year or more. In the event, notwithstanding the hopeful signs and portents with which 2023 was to commence, the foe, after having to all appearances been dealt a sharp blow, was to rally just a few months into the new year...

of string cheese and 1/2 sweet potato leftover for dinner. Lunch was a ginger shortbread cookie, but I managed a scrambled egg & crumpet for breakfast at 11:00. Then, we packed up & departed. I was in slow mode. Today I feel much better. A slice of reheated meatloaf, biscotti & coffee was perfect for breakfast.

After Church, I’m looking forward to the life of a couch potato, watching football. The reception is sketchy &, standing on a bar stool to reach it, I must adjust the antenna for reception of the games that are broadcast on different channels. The daily challenges are comical.

So, oncologist tomorrow at 10:30 with the usual blood draw, etc. and I will find out what the biopsy of my removed parts showed. Tuesday Chemo 5 and staple removal, beginning at 8:15 a.m. If I have a 6th round of chemo, that would happen around December 20, but I’m hoping the results from blood and surgery will show that Round 6 will not be necessary.

Given the weather forecast for rain/snow over the Grapevine on Thursday, we may try to head home Wednesday depending on how I feel and whether I need local care or have to attend other appointments that are as yet unknown. I’m happy that I started practicing the way to let go of the scheduling thing. I hardly think of the uncertainty as an issue at all. We go Wednesday, or early Thursday weather permitting, or Sunday after the weather becomes fair and allowing for doctor’s changes to the plan. No problem. We are together, Rand, Ravi and I, and we are happy. I’m off to Zoom Church.

Best to you all. Love,
Lina

November 28, 2022 ❧ *Origin story* ❧ Lina:

The pathology report is in. Cancer likely originated in the uterus and metastasized to the fallopian tubes, ovaries, omentum. There might have been a necrotic tumor in some adhesions to the appendix. It’s hard to interpret the meaning of all this. I asked the burning question, “What are the chances that the cancer was eradicated?” “The low side” was the response. My oncologist said, “if we get a long period of remission,” explained as 1-2 years, recurrence would be treated with more chemo. I do not think the HIPEC was figured in because I don’t think there are

data for initial treatment w/ HIPEC, but the usual is that cancer remains that cannot be detected, but will sprout again. Monitoring every three months with blood tests & imaging will be in my future along with some form of drug suppression. Meanwhile, I will have Chemo 5 tomorrow and Chemo 6 on or about December 20.

Tomorrow after chemo, I will ask my surgeon whether there are data on the effect of HIPEC as related to remission. I may just be part of the evolving data. We've done our part. I am grateful for the strength God has and is giving me. I'm looking forward to healing up and gaining weight. I weighed in at 101.6 today, dressed without shoes. The twig, maybe hickory, maple or oak. Rand made a fantastic dinner of chicken dumpling soup & veggies last night, seen above. Eat your chicken soup.

Given the weather forecast, we will aim for travel on Wednesday. It's a bit of a quick turn-around, but the weather between LA & the Bay looks pretty sketchy until next Monday otherwise. I'm getting in over a mile of walking for the past few days.

We went to Brent's Deli after the doctor today. I've loved Brent's cheese blintzes with sour cream for about 50 years. I will pad the calories at breakfast tomorrow. I had a nice big bowl of chicken soup, green salad and part of a tuna melt for lunch. I am doing better on the calorie intake side since Saturday's rough patch. Onward & upward.

Love to you all,
Lina

November 30, 2022 🍷 *Doc Optimist* 🍷 **Lina:**

Just a brief note before we hit the road to Oakland, to share the positive report from the surgeon yesterday. It was a whirl with the 3 doctor appointments during chemo that lasted until about 2:30, and necessary activities thereafter. The surgeon said he believes I will be in the 20-30% group that does not recur, given my excellent response to the chemo & having HIPEC. He said I should be optimistic and will contribute to positive data for HIPEC that might encourage initial use in appropriate cases. Yay.

I was overstimulated, I think from the Benadryl that is necessary before chemo, and my ambition turned into a yummy pizza dinner (at right).



The "chicken dumpling soup" to which Lina alludes is built upon "pelmeni," a traditional Russian staple, filled (as here) with chicken; elsewhere with pork, lamb or beef. We boiled these in chicken broth and served them up with sour cream and tamari.



Was this in Lina ambitious? But pizza is an honorable meal.

Now we're off, blessed & sending my prayers for blessing upon you all,

Love,

Lina

November 30, 2022 ☞ *Beating the rain* ☞ Lina:

Home safe & sound. The traffic was light & we were home by 3:00 pm.

Glad to beat the rain.

Love to you. Keep warm,

Lina

December 2, 2022 ☞ *Hairs on my head* ☞ Lina:

Thirty days since surgery. I keep wondering why I'm so tired still. Then I recall that I had chemo on Tuesday. I'm sleeping & eating. Nothing new to report.

Our next trip down south will be around December 17. Sixth, and hopefully last chemo on December 20th. Doctor appointment on December 22 w/ surgeon. Then home.

There are hairs on my head. I don't know if they will stay, but it's a nice reminder that I have hair which will fill in at some point.

Stay well,

Lina

December 5, 2022 ☞ *Year-end bills &c* ☞ Lina:

The ground is wet & arugula is sprouting all over the backyard. I'm in week 5 post surgery & I'm starting to be able to start the day w/o nausea & Tylenol, & feeling like I might take on some household tasks.

I settled my pending case, so no trial will start on December 12 & I don't need to file anything else. What I do need to address is all the year-end bills that are due before the year's end, Bar fees, storage for the year for office stuff, business insurance, & annual donations.

Judy Gough is stopping by on Friday on her round trip to return her grandson to Oakland from Oregon. She's known as Uber Grandma to the grandkids, all college age now. The mind reels. I find the young are such an inspiration with their futures unfolding, although their parents reportedly find abundant cause to worry.

We are home for another 12 days or so & then head south for a doctor's appointment & blood work on the 19th, chemo 6, the last, fingers crossed, on the 20th & surgeon follow-up/status check on the 22nd. Then it's back to Oakland. I anticipate another trip south before the end of year to have my titanium port removed. I hope to be much more vigorous by then, at least when the chemo side-effects abate.

It was so nice to see the Church decorated for Christmas during the hybrid service on Zoom on Sunday. So much love flows there.

No news really. It's a beautiful day outside with the sparkling clean air. Be well & cherish your loved ones.

Love,
Lina

December 8, 2022 ☺ *Perkier* ☺ Lina:

Counting down to final chemo on December 20.

Feeling more perky now. Rand has been feeding me all those high calorie things he loves. Stuffed baked potatoes were yummy last night, stuffed w/ leftover chicken cordon bleu, mushrooms sautéed in butter, onions, sour cream & a side of steamed veggies, cauliflower, zucchini & yellow squash. I ate it all up.

We have 9 or 10 days before travel down south, where we will leave after my appointment w/ my surgeon on Thursday, two weeks from today, in hopes of beating the Christmas weekend exodus from L.A.

We have not done much by way of Christmas. But a few decorations remain around the living room & outside lights from last year. We hope to get some cards out, but I'm bad about that in a normal year. I have a closet for the gifts that never got mailed over the past 5-10 years. It's part of my irritating attributes. We shall see how it goes. I may gain enough jam to shop. Hope springs eternal.

There is not much new to report. Burr. Stay warm & dry. It's hard to think about those living rough & suffering. Harder still to help except w/ prayer & support for our Church "blessing bag" ministry headed up by Linda & Sharon, who have been passing out new socks, T-shirts, toiletries, etc., & by our Friday night meals. Maybe I will find some ideas in the new year. Meanwhile, pray.

Judgment x2

It took me a few moments to recall the provenance of the piece to which Lina alludes here. The date helped: the essay, titled “A Theology of the Present Moment,” appeared in the *New York Review of Books* that same month. Its author was not a physicist but a novelist, Marilynne Robinson, and her subject had to do with the interplay, the synergy, if you will, between science and faith. This would have been the passage that caught Lina’s attention:

Most people in the world would say their lives are insignificant, historically speaking, but it might be prudent to consider whether the relative blamelessness that is assumed to come with insignificance can be relied upon. We are not competent to decide how much we matter in the long term.

One of my favorite Puritans – the seventeenth-century divine John Flavel – said that we will be judged twice, once when we die and once when everything we have said or done has had its final effect. Whisper a cruel rumor – who knows what force it will acquire if it lives.

I’m off for a morning shower. My abdomen is almost healed up on the surface. Love to you & peace.

Lina

December 13, 2022 ☞ *We are judged twice* ☞ Lina:

Loving the sunshine. I went outside yesterday to move my van & car for street cleaning on our side today until noon. I saw the sun, but it was chilly at 4:00. I got in 1.3 miles yesterday, low but it’s something. Today, I see that sunshine & blue sky, but it’s 47 degrees. So when I move the cars back, I will bundle up.

I’m still taking it slow, but feeling good over all. I don’t need even Tylenol most of the time. I’m reminded by my friend that I’m not 20 & it takes longer to heal when you’re 69. When did this happen?

I read a fascinating essay today that Rand shared about science & religion, written by a scientist who commented on the similarities between quantum physics & Genesis. Quite thoughtful & thought provoking. One part I loved in my memory was her quote of John Flavel, a 17th century theologian, who said we are judged twice, first at death, second when all our words & deeds have had their final effect. The latter speaking to the endless number of choices & possibilities that flow from our lives. My brain is tired, but it is a reminder that what we do matters & I need to always listen for God’s will, because whatever I intend or do, the effect is according to God’s will. So, according to my faith, I can have peace when I try to follow.

I’m hoping to start getting tasks accomplished here in preparation for going to LA for 5 days to complete my final chemo, #6. I have stacks of laundry & stuff on my desk to deal with before we go, like my annual business insurance application, & year end donations.

I hope you are all staying warm & healthy. Love to you.

Lina

December 18, 2022 ☞ *Unplugged!* ☞ Lina:

Arrived in Northridge safe & sound, but...forgot my phone at home. That means 5 days w/ no phone. I get text messages on my iPad, but text

messages are not linked to my watch except through my phone. And, Android messages sometimes do not get through to my iPad. Email works, but discovery and responses are slow. No phone. Wow. I think maybe I won't mind for a few days. It might be peaceful.

We got here just after dark. Tomorrow I see my oncologist & find out what my blood indicates about whether I'm cancer free (for now) or deficient in various components, like minerals, red or white blood cells etc. Tuesday is my anticipated final chemo. I see my surgeon on Thursday for a status check & we head home immediately after that, around noon.

Happy Hanukkah to our friends who began it today. I asked a friend, raised Catholic, whose partner is Jewish whether they celebrate Hanukkah. She said, we celebrate everything, Kwanza, Hanukkah, Christmas. I like the idea of celebrating everything in life with love. We pray that you all are surrounded by love, connections & belonging. I will update when I get news tomorrow.

Love to you,
Lina

December 18, 2022 ❧ *Dodgy genes* ❧ **Lina:**

Last chemo tomorrow.

I saw my oncologist today. The blood work is not back yet but he was very enthusiastic about the surgeons' report on how well the chemo whacked the tumors, but I was still stage IV because it had spread outside the original site, suspected left ovary. He is going to follow up on my genetic report that identified one abnormal sequence. Apparently, this abnormality may put me at risk for cancer in other areas and/or may be the basis for the type of cancer I developed, which will inform the monitoring. He is very thorough.

Going forward, I will get testing for baselines in January to compare with markers that they will monitor. I will have a CT scan mid-January & bone density scan, CA-125 measures as part of the blood. So back to the Valley for a week or so in January.

My doctor said I can expect to gain weight easier and have normal

energy starting a month or so after chemo is done. He expects that I will be considered to be in remission when the results of January testing are in. He was impressed with my hair growth, but said it might fall out again. I like the caps though & keep wearing them. Warm head is good. Maybe I will start a hat collection or build on the current one really

I'm getting closer to two miles of walking daily and eating more. I'm down to 102# though, with clothes. But, I think I recovered a pound over the past two days of focused eating every 2-3 hours, even with the drive.

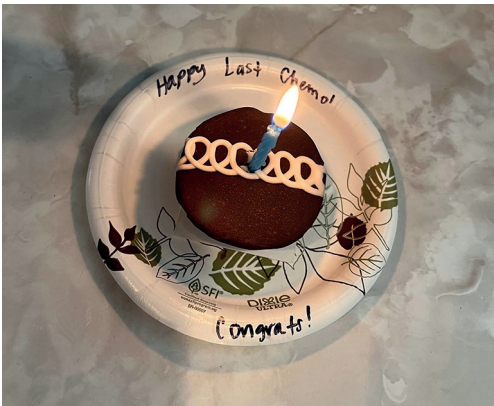
We had yummy salmon, brown rice, yellow squash & broccoli for dinner. So I continue to eat well. Ravi seems to have settled into his two-home routine. We return Thursday when I will be reunited with my phone. It may again take a day to warm the house to 68 degrees. We are enjoying the sunshine here.

Love to you,
Lina

December 21, 2022 ☞ *A traffic epiphany* ☞ Lina:

Chemo went forward as usual except I had a different nurse who was kind of rough with the process of sticking my port. Knowing it was the last one made everything easier, so it balanced out. At the end of the infusion, the staff gathered around & sang "Happy last chemo to you ...", & even gave me a lovely warm hat & scarf & a cake (at left). Oh my. They are so nice & capable there.

So Rand & I headed out to run some errands, mostly securing dinner provisions for the rest of our stay from Whole Foods located near where I grew up, in an area formerly known by all the teens as Tampaland. This was a favorite hiking area for teens in the 70s (who are now in *their* 70s), oak trees, streams, hills & olives for miles on Getty oil land. Now it is a 5-6 mile shopping complex with everything from fancy restaurants, to Ulta, Best Buy, Walmart, Nordstrom Rack, 2 grocery stores & Whole Foods at the end. The rest is filled in with medical office buildings, a giant church Shepard of the Hills & residential. Lots of traffic & complex traffic controls. So, after we got groceries we made our way out of the complex parking to the main road, headed back to Tampa.



Nobody tell her that corn starch figures in the Hostess ingrediants.

Tampa goes over the Freeway there with 5 lanes leading to east & west on-ramps for the Ronal Regan freeway & two through lanes down Tampa, past our junior high (now a magnet as all the schools here seem to be), to our condo in the flats.

As I approached Tampa to turn right, the arrow was green, but the car at the light was stopped half way into the intersection. I tooted lightly a couple times to urge the driver forward & he went so I made the light, only to be stopped at the next red light 15' ahead, where I pulled in along side the confused driver, because there was only one car in front of me, better maneuvering down 3 narrow lanes on Tampa.

I soon noticed the driver next to me gesturing for me to roll down my window. He was about 20 something, dark haired, maybe India lineage. I thought maybe he wanted directions & would not shoot us, so I rolled the window down as Rand wondered aloud "what's going on."

So the young man said, "I just wanted to wish you a happy holiday time and that will be a beautiful day." I thanked him & wished him the same & said "This is a beautiful day also, so sunny and bright, I hope you enjoy it too." He agreed. When did I see Christ's face? You know.

The light turned green & I shifted to LA driver mode, aggression required to fit in, but with a warm smile & a happy heart. Then I explained to Rand that he was the driver stopped in the intersection that I was talking to critically as I tooted. Funny how things happen. It could have been something else entirely, but there's something about needing the human connection to share what makes life matter. Fear robs us of sharing too often.

So that was yesterday & it's past 1:00 with a list of errands to prepare for tomorrow's departure. Lunch first though.

We see my main surgeon tomorrow at 11:30 & leave immediately thereafter for home. I come back here for CT scan with contrast in midJanuary, bone density scan a week later & Oncologist January 19. Then? We shall see.

Love to you all & enjoy the many blessings of the season.

Lina

December 23, 2022 ☞ *My phone, at last* ☞ **Lina:**

Home safe & sound & reunited with my phone. We're resting up from chemo on Tuesday & the drive yesterday, & I'm trying to beef up.

Thanks to Bill's pie & eggnog. 'Tis the season to fatten up. Next trip down south is January 17 or so for tests. No more chemo. Yay.

Merry Christmas to all. Thank you for sharing & caring.

Love to you all,

Lina

December 27, 2022 ☞ *"Pretend it didn't happen"* ☞ **Lina:**

The new year is rapidly approaching & we're looking forward to renewed health & free time to address many deferred items on our to do list. Our drain at the back of the house is doing its job. My worries about a break or clog, which I did not get to evaluating before the rain, did not happen. So the, "pretend it didn't happen," course worked out. Meanwhile, my van is dry inside & the tarp on the shed is doing its job, undisturbed by the wind. Go bungees.

I'm gaining ground now. My energy is increasing as aches, pain & nausea are shrinking away like a tumor in the face of chemo.

Bill (the retired pastor who married Rand & I) & Beth, his wife, dropped by w/ a calorie laden pumpkin pie before Christmas. Yum. Rand, his brother, Greg & I gorged on crockpot turkey thighs with all the fixins. I spent the day in PJs & napped most of the day after I got the crockpot filled.

By Boxing Day, I could feel the lessening of the side effects from my last chemo, so I anticipate only improvement going forward. I haven't gotten on the scale but expect to have gained a bit with my more frequent eating practice. I'm still getting in a mile to 1.9 the past week & I've been out for groceries a couple times since Christmas Eve.

We have about 3 more weeks at home before heading to Northridge & I'm 8 weeks past surgery tomorrow. I don't expect any new data to share until test results in mid-January. So, I probably won't have anything to post about, unless I encounter one of those amazing encounters w/ another of the amazing people who give away love freely.



Christmas at The Crumbling Manse™

Ravi is doing well too. I can't figure out how he can look so cute just sleeping.

Happy New Year & all our heartfelt wishes for your peace & satisfaction in it.

Love,

Lina

December 30, 2022 ❧ ***Wash 2022 right out of my hair*** ❧ **Lina:**

Definite improvement, by the clean laundry measure.

I failed to provide a comment on my follow up with the surgeon on the Thursday we returned home. We left right after & I was not really with it.

The surgeon said I was healing up nicely after he peeked inside. He said I can expect to get stronger and stronger as I recover from the chemo & the surgery & return to my regular life. I will return for monitoring every 3 months by blood & CT measures. He said I will feel it if the cancer returns. But he is optimistic that Dr. Ponec will declare me to be in remission in January after the CT scan & blood work. I was the first to be treated with initial HIPEC at Cedars for ovarian cancer. I was the right candidate. So, I must do well as an example. I'll do my part.

We are venturing out for an early dinner tomorrow night & the rain is supposed to stop by 5 pm. I'm gonna wash 2022 right out of my hair. Though it is short, I have hair again.

Happy New Year, & many, many thanks for your encouragement, love & prayers. God listens.

Lina



"I can't figure out how he can look so cute just sleeping."

2023: hopes rise

LINA'S PRINCIPAL CARETAKERS AT CEDARS were young Dr. Ponec, who was never disposed to proffer false hopes, and older* Dr. Manuel, high on HIPEC and inclined to draw welcome conclusions every time the bloodwork numbers appeared to suggest these. There was a bare chance, early in 2023, that between chemo, surgery and the early administration of hyperthermic therapy, the bathing of the abdominal cavity with tumor-unfriendly chemicals, that the foe might have been extinguished. A quarter of patients so treated have enjoyed long-term remission, and the early lab work suggested, or at least did not discourage the notion, that Lina might be among the fortunate few.

It was not to be. By spring her blood “cancer numbers,” which had descended to clinically normal levels at the beginning of the year, had begun to climb again, surprising even Dr. Ponec, who had anticipated a considerably longer period of remission. We were subsequently to learn that hers was an unusually aggressive and resourceful cancer, a shapeshifter, a molecular Houdini fiendishly capable of reconfiguring its genetic makeup to ward off the effects of whatever therapeutic cocktail modern medicine might attempt to throw in its face, whatever chains with which the clinicians might have sought to bind it.

She was undaunted. Discouraged, perhaps – and why not, after the first flush of triumph following an arduous but apparently successful course of treatment in 2022? – but still in “failure is not an option” mode. Dr. Manuel, although he was not to treat her directly again,

**“Older” Dr. Manuel was probably, and might still remain, on the green side of fifty. Pretty much every salaried person looks young to me these latter years.*

continued as cheerleader, and right or wrong, he always did much to shore up her morale. If chemo, surgery and HIPEC between them had failed to do more than wing the target, there seemed no reason to suppose that the oncological arsenal lacked for other ordnance, and that another fusillade from a different salient might administer a crippling injury sufficient at least to arrest the progress of the disease.

All this was yet to come at the turning of the year, and Lina, inclined constitutionally to optimism, took heart from her post-op CA-125 “cancer numbers,” now down to the so-called normal range. When by spring the numbers began to trend unmistakably upward again, it came time to look into other options, other strategies.

January’s high spirits, as well as the streets, were slightly dampened when Lina sailed through an intersection (at low speed, fortunately) in the rain and T-boned a poor old gentleman in his sedan, totaling our car and, I imagine, his as well. She and I were both certain that we had enjoyed the green light, and I am afraid I was...not abusive by any means, but stern and censorious with the other driver who, being (as it turned out) quite blameless, ought not to have had to endure my unwonted reproaches on top of the unpleasantness of a wrecked car. By rights I should have groveled apologies instead.

January 3, 2023 ☾ *Full of surprises* ☾ Lina:

New adventures in my walk. I think 2023 will be about alignment with God's plan for me & discernment of it. Joy is here.

I improvised a rain hood to go with Ravi's life vest & keep him dryer. New adventures in Ravi's walk. He does not like to go for a walk in the rain. He was not really pleased with my effort. I laughed a lot though.

Rand & I enjoy a New Year's Eve dinner w/ our friends Robert & Rebecca. Rand's dinner came w/ chocolate lava cake that quickly became a mass undertaking.

Rand and I made it home early for our traditional New Year kiss, under the covers by 11:30. We first got together romantically on NYE 1995 when we kissed at midnight & wondered how we had failed to see it since 1969. We've been together since.

Life is full of surprises.

Exhibit A: We have a mouse intruder, an "interloper, bashing through the door of the mind, without knocking." (Paulette Jiles, *The Color of Lightning*) I was enjoying the glow of a hot shower & she zipped across the bedroom, under the chair & behind the bookshelf. There is never just one.

We hardened the targets immediately upon this discovery. Everything in the kitchen, not already invincible, went into jars & heavy plastic tubs, even instant Via coffee one-cup packets. Mouse trap deployed. She doesn't have to die, but she can't stay inside. We hope to catch her tail. It has happened.

Taco Tuesday here. I will make them w/ turkey. It is a nice meal in the palm of my hand. We hope your New Year is off to a righteous start.

Love to you,
Lina

January 9, 2023 ☾ *Slosh, slosh* ☾ Lina:

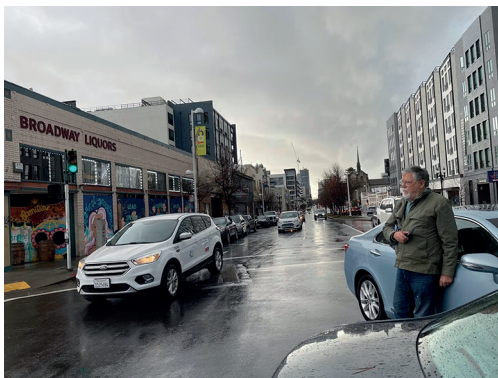
Slosh, slosh. We are snug indoors though. Back in 1908, they built our home anticipating that our street is naturally part of Echo Creek. The drain behind our house appears to be handling the flow. We are grateful.



The rain or the fashion statement? Unhappy dog is undecided.

The wars against the mice

The Crumbling Manse™ has stood since 1908, and has creaked and shifted many a time on its foundations. Occasionally this has opened up tiny crevices through which a venturesome rodent in search of food and shelter may squeeze. We had several such incursions over the years, and learned through hard experience that ruthless countermeasures, deployed early on, were called for. One weekend in, I believe, 2005 we belatedly grasped that what had begun as a reconnaissance in force had turned into the goddamn Normandy landings. The counteroffensive was a near-run thing, but we prevailed. There have been multiple probes since then, which we drove off with traps. I fear sometimes, though, that by culling the clumsy I have merely helped breed a race of nimble-finger rodent Einsteins for which posterity will curse me.



Gloomily waiting for the tow truck.

Episode at an intersection

I would have been prepared to swear in court that we had the green light, but security footage subsequently revealed that my reproaches to the blameless old guy we T-boned – fortunately not at high speed – were unjustified.

Up until this point I had enormous faith in Lina's motoring chops. In her previous incarnation as an itinerant musician she had driven tens of thousands of miles all around the country, sometimes in direly inclement weather. This lapse shook my confidence – and hers.

Pro tip: the impact of the airbags beneath the dashboard will hurt your shins like nobody's business. Ours ached for months.

We head down to Northridge next Monday or Tuesday depending on the weather. We will be there through Wednesday the following week. We don't think we will need to return to LA for months, but I guess that depends on test results from next week. It's been a long layover at home, since December 22. I could get used to this. I hope I can remember what we need to take down with us.

I'm feeling more like my former self now but I tire easily. I must remember that I don't need to judge myself lazy for napping & not feeling ambitious enough yet. I feel my core strength is much better. I can sit up from a lying position w/o pain. The arms need work. My 2 pound weights are at the condo, used only once.

When we get there, I'll be back to the built in stair master & will start walking & working with the weights. We don't know yet when we will decamp, but I expect it won't be until March or so. Test data again will drive those decisions. Meanwhile the rain is glorious, although Ravi does not really appreciate it.

We have enjoyed some neighbor meet-ups under the freeway nearby, where we all take our dogs when the rain is too heavy & relentless. There is a big area w/ wood chips & greenery & Echo Creek runs under that with park areas that are not covered. Oakland is full of little treasures like that.

Love to you all,
Lina

January 12, 2023 🍷 *Crash!* 🍷 **Lina:**

Two steps forward, one step back. We had a car accident on Tuesday. A car ran the red light in front of me & I hit it. Air bags deployed & our car is probably a total with less than 40K miles on it. The car is a bummer but we, Rand, Ravi & I are OK. Nothing broken, but bruises on Rand's & my legs from the air bag and various aches and pains. We consider ourselves very fortunate & are grateful.

I am particularly grateful that the air bag did not hit my port. I went to the doctor yesterday to get checked out from the wreck and to address a spot on my suture that has started to hurt. I started antibiotics yesterday & the spot is feeling much better. I was having sharp pains from

there & began applying Neosporin, but improvement is obvious now about 24 hours after starting the antibiotics. My primary doctor at Kaiser is great.

The wreck will complicate our travel plans. We will need to decide whether to take the van or rent a car & hope to be reimbursed. I'm glad I patched the roof. But, the van is not comfortable for Rand on long trips & I've become used to the comfort of driving the Lexus. We only have had it since about September last year, after our former car was totaled by a hit and run driver as it sat parked in front of our house. We actually lost our last two cars to drivers who hit them while parked. We are fortunate to have the van as an option. Ravi likes the view from his seat. But, we will need to attempt to remove the heavy items stored in the van currently. Too much stuff everywhere.

We will be in LA for a bit longer than a week, from Tuesday until the following Wednesday for the tests previously identified. Our next currently scheduled appointment in LA is with our tax preparer at the end of February. We may be able to decamp by March, but there will be significant moving of stuff required. That's the current status.

I hope you are all well. The streets will remain slippery as the rain continues. I consider myself to be a good driver, with my previously unblemished driving record. But, I was still surprised to slide on the wet street, unable to even slow much when I saw him coming. Being careful cannot always prevent an accident, but it's a good practice. I should have remembered to pray for safe passage.

Love to all,
Lina

January 16, 2023 ☾ PWSD ☾ Lina:

Back in Northridge. We got in at about 5:30 & had some Thai takeout. It was a beautiful day. So clear after the rain. We drove through some pretty intense rain though.

We are both pretty jumpy while driving PWSD (post wreck stress disorder). Everyone is a suspect that is aiming to run into us or otherwise cause a wreck. We don't want to drive, but we had to get back on the horse. We are more careful, I think.



Somewhere over the rainbow an 18-wheeler, seen en route to LA.

We found another replacement car, nine years old, low miles. It was a comfortable ride. Rand was ecstatic that he did not have to ride in the van. So we're here for 15 days. LA is a place that requires driving to get just about anywhere. So we will strive to feel comfortable again driving. Remember to breathe deeply.

Love to you,
Lina

January 20, 2023 ☺ *Live & learn. Good idea...* ☺ Lina:

...I think I will adopt it. As reported previously, we are back in LA. I saw my oncologist today & had my CT scan last Wednesday. The CT results were not available to my doctor when I saw him today. He did answer all my questions about the future plan. He said, although he did not have the CT results yet, he would be shocked if there were any issues revealed by the CT given my excellent response to treatment & the surgeon's actual observations during surgery. He will call me when he has the CT result. My blood work all looks good, although he did not have my CA-125 measure yet. My hemoglobin and white blood cell counts are up and recovering. He said I can expect continuing improvement in my strength & getting back to a normal life. So, just monitoring for the next few years. Blood work will tell whether I need another CT scan. I'm good to go forward, as I work to discern which way is forward.

Update on the auto accident, we got the video from the accident from the street camera. I'm shocked & humiliated, but it was my fault based on the video. My light turned red. I'm deeply upset by my certainty that I saw the light green and was wrong. Can I trust my own perceptions? Rand believed our light was green too, and he usually reacts if the light turns yellow in the intersection, but we have a copy of the video that we cannot deny showed the contrary. Fortunately nobody was seriously hurt. It makes me want to never drive again but will try for now to be more attentive and present. I know accidents happen, but I was so certain the light was green for me. I have no excuse or explanation and accepted liability. Many lessons here. I plan also to take a "Mature Driver" defensive driving refresher course & to identify & eliminate driving distractions. I was so confident in my safe driving practices. Live, learn & try to do better.

On Tuesday I have my port removed from my chest and on Wednesday I have a bone density scan. I expect that we will return home next Thursday. Then, I'm free until March 23, when I see my doctors & give blood. I expect that we will decamp from the condo at the end of February, after we come down to see my accountant for our tax preparation.

Turkey taco night.

Love to all,
Lina

January 24, 2023 ☾ De-ported. Yay. ☽ Lina:

I feel like I'm returning from a strange diversion that began in late June 2022. After the suspension of time for the past years of the pandemic, it seems like another period of watching, rather than experiencing life. Maybe it's the isolation from so many shared experiences that were normal once.

Today marks another significant milestone, the removal of my port that was the access point for chemo. No more chemo, so who needs a titanium port in their chest with tubing into the left ventricle or aorta. I was so grateful to get it before starting chemo, so that I did not have to experience the caustic effects of chemo delivered by IV into the vein. Now, Dr. Chin has removed it & sewn me up. No more lump below my collar bone. In a few weeks it might be like it never happened. Regardless, its removal does mark the end of chemo treatment in a physical and more convincing way than just knowing. Staff at Interventional Radiation understood the significance and offered congratulations. That somehow made the transition more real & like a reason to celebrate. I can't say enough to convey my experience of the kind and competent care these amazing professionals deliver daily and gave to me. Six months ago, I had no idea. What a wonder.

I have to watch the site of the removal for infection, keeping it dry and make it 3 days without such signs, then watch it for 2 weeks after I start showering and changing the dressing on Friday. It has only been out 3 hours. The area is starting to kind of ache and itch. I am following the discharge instructions, rest for the rest of the day.

I think eating a fantastic Persian lunch qualifies as rest. I was hungry



Unimport-ant. This was the channel through which Lina's chemo formula was delivered for months, sparing considerable wear and tear on her veins. She was nevertheless happy to have it extracted.

after I was released. I did not eat or drink anything since yesterday, but a sip of water at 6:30 this morning, per instructions. We discovered a fantastic restaurant across the street from the Interventional radiology location, upon the recommendation of my nurse today. Next time you are in Encino, stop by Safad. "Juicy Chicken" (marinated), saffron rice with Safad salad (dates, feta, olives, lentils & mixed greens). Yum, yum. I got some lentil soup to go, for my "light" dinner tonight & I have leftovers from lunch (shown above). Parking at the medical facility cost more than a gourmet lunch. But, it was cold & I did not want to hike in and back today from the local neighborhood. I indulged & opted to take it easy. Tomorrow is my bone scan, in the afternoon. Then, we will pack up and head home on Thursday.

I got my test results back from last Friday. The CT scan was clean. No tumor activity, but some things to watch. Some fluid build up, that my oncologist says likely will resolve. Nothing like before. My CA-125 (cancer antigen marker) was normal (18.7 in a normal range of 0-30-ish). Oncologist said that above 0 is normal because the body can have the antigen when there is no disease process and I am clear for now. I can only go forward & wait for whatever. I see my oncologist & surgeon for monitoring & comparison on March 23.

The CT revealed signs of my arthritis and bone spurs in my lower spine and shoulder. I don't have any symptoms thought. I think exercising with weights will be what is necessary. But, perhaps tomorrow's bone scan will show more for planning how to avoid or mitigate the aging process. The CT also showed cysts in my liver, which apparently are not related to cancer, but hold water & may cause symptoms that warrant treatment at some point. I guess I will have to accept that I am the same age as old people. But, the cancer seems to be either gone or hiding for now. I will have another CT scan in late March, when we return. So, we likely will keep the condo until the end of March, if that is ok w/ our hosts.

Best wishes to all for a growing life that nurtures the better angels of our nature. Thank you for sharing prayers with me. I am grateful & send mine to you also.

Love,
Lina

January 28, 2023 ☺ *Kinda normal* ☺ Lina:

I'm slipping into that pushing habit, working after I feel it's time to stop. It's part of being home with so many things that need attention. But, I'm not feeling the exhaustion like before when I do it. I rest a bit, then feel like doing more.

For example I decided to make chicken pot pies tonight. Not exactly a success on the pie crust. I will need to talk to Pastor Bill & see what he does. When you have to rely on 7th grade foods class for your pie crust it's time to be worried (2C. flour, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter & $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp of salt, pastry blender until it looks like oatmeal, drizzle 3 Tsp ice water, guess whether it's wet enough to roll). But I did use up the left-over slow cooked chicken soup-ish filling from earlier in the week. That had celery, onion, garlic, carrots, chicken & butternut squash, but needed poultry seasoning that I did not have in Northridge. I added mushrooms, poultry seasoning & some additional baked chicken breast. I scrambled around looking for vessels, rolled out the crust & put a bottom & top crust on the filled ramekins. Baked at 375 for 40 minutes, guessing, and it tasted pretty good. It was some vigorous cooking action. I was too tired to make the salad, but figured there were veggies in the pot pies.

After I sat down while the 4 pot pies cooked, I was able to resume, getting them on the table. I feel strong still after cooking & shopping today (not Costco though). With my 10 minute after-dinner walk, I got about 2 1/2 miles of walking in. Definitely more stamina but it will take a while to feel something closer to last January. The area of my port removal is healing up nicely as is my surgery line. Still only 102 lbs though, in PJs. So, more eating to do.

Tomorrow is Division Playoffs, so I will lounge after Zoom Church. I'm trying to discern whether to take a new case. I never know why God sends me people who need, but it may be that I should provide some guidance that is not necessarily taking on the case. So, I will provide my free initial consultation & decide how I can help, without taking the case myself. I'm not feeling strong enough for that commitment. But, I will pray about it.

Love to you,
Lina



"When you have to rely on 7th grade foods class for your pie crust"



We enjoyed this enormously, taking it in at a local theatre/bistro. Both of us thought Cate Blanchett had a lock on "Best Actress" for the 2024 Oscar do, and that the film at least had a chance. The Academy thought otherwise, and for our part...well, Cate wuz robbed.

February 3, 2023 ☞ Idle weekdays ☞ Lina:

A week ago yesterday since we got back from LÅ and it seems so long ago. I continue to heal up & realize I need to work at good posture now my abdomen can take it. I walked 3.4 miles yesterday, just running errands. I may be ready for a Costco run soon. I'm starting to stretch more, but it is slow going. I'm not ready to do actual exercise. Maybe next week.

Tonight we plan to walk to see *Tár* at the New Parkway Theater, a 12 minute walk says Google Maps. It is daunting though because it is so cold and we will get out around 10:30. It is a kind of a mental obstacle, going out late on foot. Oakland is such a nice place, but it is scary at night these days. I think that fear is just too much. Having the fun despite my anxiety will be liberating. I'm not willing to stay home after dark.

We head south again in about 3 weeks to see our CPA for tax prep. We scheduled pick up for our rented furniture for that same time. Then we will need to begin moving our substantial buildup of stuff.

I see the doctors again in March for follow up, and hope for more good news. We're expecting to move whatever is left in March & vacate the condo. That will be a cap on a wild ride.

Love & best wishes to you,

Lina

February 8, 2023 ☞ Walking with enthusiasm ☞ Lina:

Up & running, or walking, with enthusiasm. Weeds & arugula have taken over the back yard. Today & yesterday, I got my heart rate up to the exercise range for over 30 minutes, filling our green bin. Today was the milder, mostly cutting the creeping rose vine & loading the can with yesterday's harvest which yielded an average heart rate of 106 over 40 minutes. Surprisingly, I only had mild stiffness from yesterday. I made pizza & did laundry yesterday too. I'm definitely feeling stronger. The sunshine was lovely both days

I still am hesitant to say I'm cured, knowing many who have had cancer return. I guess I don't know how to feel safe from it, but that's another reason to continue in prayer, the same prayer for God's grace & peace that I say for others. Knowing how useless worry usually is doesn't make

it go away, but prayer does. It keeps me talking to God, so all good. I think it would be easy to lose sight of my gratitude if I were too sure of my amazing recovery.

I have consulted a few folks about their educational rights under federal law, and referred them to other lawyers. February is usually slow, but they call & email, so I'm doing what I can to advise. I feel tired from that & can tell that I'm not ready to keep working. I will reevaluate in June.

We will be home for 2 more weeks before heading back to LA. The furniture rental folks are coming to pick up the sofa, recliner & guest bed on the 24th & Rand's brother is driving down separately to help. We are moving as much as we can out of the condo, leaving necessities for our March 23 doctors' visits.

It's amazing how much stuff we have there now, mostly kitchen stuff, linens & food. We won't be back to LA until June if my blood work shows no elevated CA 125 marker. The monitoring visit in June should be a one day turnaround so we can get a hotel.

I am so grateful for all the love & support that so many have given to me. Thank you.

Lina

February 19, 2023 ❧ Sod off! ❧ Lina:

Behind the transition to normal. I'm feeling so much more energetic this week that we are doing things that were common before, like taking on the backyard weeds, with confidence. After pulling weeds with vigor the first week of February, I went a bit too far last week when I decided to fill the trunk with sad looking yellow sod from Home Depot (who can resist 50% off?) & obtained Rand's unhappy assistance to drag it up to the back yard & place it in the areas needed for Ravi's late night trips to the backyard.

I now agree that laying sod is not something Rand & I will do again, but perhaps it will be worth the effort. Neither one of us had a heart attack or injury, but that sod is just too heavy for me to bring up into the yard, even dried out as it was. You can see one row of strips at the back of the yard & a square-ish area to the right (5 rolls of sod each 2'x4' or so). I



Compared to its state in mid-2024, the appalling back forty pictured here might as well be the Boboli Gardens. The horrible heavy sod ("unhappy assistance" scarcely begins to describe it) is barely visible at right. Also: the deadful shed, with its rusted roof and rotted floor.

pulled the weeds from the area to be filled & dragged the sections into place after Rand deposited them to the approximate location. It took 2 goes at it over two days. But, although we were both worn out by the efforts, it was within our exercise range. I felt stronger, not broken. Yay.

We head to L.A. in two or three days, depending on the weather. Snow is forecast for Wednesday & we may need to go on Tuesday to avoid snow down south through the Grapevine, so I've heard it said. That's how I knew, in case you wonder.

My cuts & repairs seem to be healed on the outside & sleep & digestion seem to have settled into much better patterns. So, this must be what being healed feels like.

Ravi sees the doggie dental hygienist in L.A. on Friday before we see our accountant in the afternoon. Rand's brother will be on hand that morning when the supplemental furniture is picked up. Then we're coming back Saturday. That's about all the news. Hope you are all warm & well.

Lina

February 25, 2023 ☺ *Sitting tight, staying warm* ☺ **Lina:**

Brrr. It has been wet & cold here in So. Cal. I-5 at the Grapevine was closed much of yesterday from snow & remained closed this morning. So, we have been sitting tight & staying warm. We packed excess foodstuffs & kitchenware to take home with us tomorrow.

Yesterday, Friday, was a day of wild weather. Our accountant is in L.A. on Wilshire Boulevard, only 11 miles or so from the doggie hygienist in No. Hollywood that Ravi saw in the morning, but it took an hour plus to get there. The rain was intense & we opted for the freeway route, rather than canyon routes that have all those hair-pin turns. On the way back we used the GPS quickest route designated, which took us on canyon roads that recouped all the foregone hair-pins with the addition of flooded areas getting over the Santa Monica mountains to the Valley. I does not usually rain so long or at such volumes as we have seen. But, we satisfied our task list & Ravi's breath is sweet with his clean teeth.

Thursday night, we, Rand, Greg & I, met up with Rand's other brother, Scott and his wife, Heather, for dinner. Scott is recovering from the am-

putation of his lower left leg made necessary by cancer just discovered a couple months ago. He is doing quite well. Only 52 and strong. Scott & Heather live down here near Northridge. We all enjoyed getting together very much. Rand & I had not seen Scott & Heather since before the pandemic. We caught a picture of the moon, Venus & Jupiter in a line to earth (seen at right).

The drive down on Wednesday was beautiful, such a contrast to the pictures of the Grapevine we saw on the weather reports yesterday & today. Forgot my watch & the dog leash, but we can manage without those. We will be loading up the two cars which should make the final move-out easier next month. We rescheduled the rental furniture pickup for next month too. It just got too complicated to fit it in on Friday morning. Now we can sit on the couch & Greg does not have to sleep on a twin bed mattress on the floor for two days. So it all worked out.

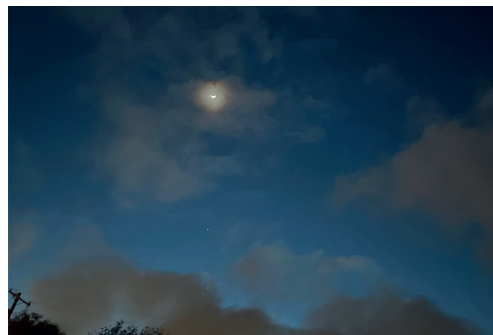
Rand is cooking lamb chops tonight, with green beans, carrots & couscous. We do like to eat. I still only weight 101 so I lots of eating ahead. I'm doing my best on the coffee ice cream & halvah.

Love to you all,
Lina

February 27, 2023 ☾ Wild ride home ☾ Lina:

The 5 remained closed from the Valley to Bakersfield. I tried my map functions on Ways & Google Maps to Bakersfield. Both said "no routes found." We were informed the night before that the 5 would open at 11:00. Nope. We did not leave until noon hoping for alternatives. When we left, the GPS said we would be home by 7:00 via 101. Such optimism. We went up the northern end of the Valley on the 118, making Ventura and the 101 in about an hour. It was very slow since everyone had only one way to go north.

We made it safe and sound just before 9:00 pm last night. The rain began in Gilroy and was intense through San Jose. It was clear to unload. Rand's brother went 101 from the Valley & got in traffic for about 2 hours getting to Ventura. He rolled in at 10:00. I cooked dinner while the men unloaded and we all had a nice salmon dinner at around 10:30. We were thankful to land safely. Answered prayers.



You'll have to take our word for it at this resolution, but Venus and Jupiter were directly beneath the moon when Lina took the picture.



Heading north along State Highway 118, the "Ronald Reagan Freeway." This area, near the Los Angeles-Ventura County line, figured in many a western (big and small screens) back in the day.



Snow in the Southland, a relatively rare occurrence.

It was sunny when we all headed south last Wednesday. Heading north, the storm had left its impression. We did catch a window of clear weather on the 101, but the snow on the hills leaving the Valley, showed a bit of what fell to close the 5. I was glad to take the 101. It is pretty that way. But, ahh weather.

Love to you,

Lina

March 8, 2023 ☺ Sit, stay, heal ☺ Lina:

Last week was my annual special education conference, COPAA 25, which was in SF this year. I went on Friday evening for the keynote address & Rand & I were treated to dinner w/ the colleagues that I worked w/ in the past. It was nice, but the City was freezing, so we took a Lyft home.

The weekend was when the main COPAA events for attorneys happened, with continuing legal education classes, awards & presentations during lunch &/or evenings. I knew it was exhausting, but not how very until Monday, when I did nothing but eat & do my couch potato thing, w/ my iPad. But, do look up, the sunsets have been a treat.

Even though I traveled light w/ iPad & a yellow pad (umbrella, water, snacks & layers), the 3 BART trips to & from the SF Westin (I took a Lyft 2x in all) & getting to my 9 classes w/15 minutes in between was a challenge. I needed all those protein snacks that I ate during the classes.

The conference had good content & I connected w/ longtime friends as I looked for discernment about my future calling. There were many good sparks. I missed Church, but know folks prayed for me. Thanks to Pastor Monte & everyone the poster of caring. It brings me joy & reminds me how much love matters.

My brother had a teleconference w/ his doctor yesterday to discuss his test results & treatment for his prostate cancer. His cancer "has not advanced" & he should do well w/ treatment. He's planning to get proton radiation which is more targeted than the general stuff, so fewer risks of damage to surrounding organs. His insurance coverage approval is pending, then he should start treatment in about 2 weeks. Rand's half-brother just had surgery for his carcinoma & lost a leg below the



Dinner with a band of professional colleagues, many of whom Lina has trained, at "Perbacco," a tony beanery in San Francisco.

knee, but is in good spirits awaiting a prosthetic. Cancer is a sniper.

Yesterday, I was up again, walked 4 miles & got the car in for service & a check up before we head to LA again to see my doctors on March 23 for a 90-day status check & finish moving out of the condo. Travel specifics again will depend on the weather.

Love & warm wishes to you.

Lina

March 19, 2023 ☺ *What is my quest?* ☺ Lina:

Gearing up for the last monthly trip to LA. We head to the Northridge condo early next week for quarterly tests & to move out of our digs there. It seems like such a quick reversal of my diagnosis in July 2022 when compared to the persistence of changes wrought by COVID. I feel so close to normal that it's hard to believe how far down I was & my unlikely recovery, projected in July. I'm so grateful for answered prayer that somehow comes with a pang of survivor guilt over the people I know who have been lost to cancer. I know it is about grace, but still I ask: Why should I be so fortunate when we've lost so many fine individuals? What is my quest? What is God's plan for me? Questions without satisfying answers. I thank my friends, family and well-wishers for all the power of their prayers and positive projections.

I'm still staying home much more than the before times, partly because I'm still underpowered, but I'm exercising, eating well & looking forward to getting out when the weather settles down sufficiently to walk more to the various local venues and/or transit options. Costco does not intimidate me now. I can carry stuff. I guess that means our long-delayed plans to de-clutter at home must be implemented soon.

We took a drive on Thursday to Sonoma to pick up Rand's quarterly "new release" from his wine club. It was a beautiful day of sunshine. Ravi enjoyed his walk in the Sonoma Square park & his lounging with the boss. Thank goodness for the additional daylight that lets us get home later, given our pattern of getting out of the house late. Life is good. I'm mindful to enjoy it & focus on the blessings.

All my best wishes & love go out to you,

Lina



Chilling in the wine country. When we signed up with this winery fifteen years ago they had much grander premises outside of town, which they later sold. This was one of the last times we stopped in at their humbler storefront in downtown Sonoma.



"Never use double-sided carpet tape, or be ready to spend many hours removing it from the floor afterwards." As one does.

March 27, 2023 ☺ "It will fit" ☺ Lina:

Mission completed. We moved out of the condo & arrived back home on Saturday evening at sunset. How many times will I say, "I'm never moving again?" This was a mini move but stuff does accrete even in a few months. Never use double-sided carpet tape, or be ready to spend many hours removing it from the floor afterwards. (at right). We did not get on the road until 1:30 pm, but encountered no delays coming home. Traveling mercies, answered prayer. Yay!

I had blood tests 3/25 & my CA125 cancer marker has gone up to 81, above the normal range, 0-35, but far below the 2,000+ that I registered in July last year. My oncologist said it is common to have fluctuations & could not say whether this means that the cancer is back. He said we will know from the results of my CT & PET scans on April 26, which will show whether there is any recurrence. But, I feel so much better. I'll take that reality for now.

We had beautiful drive, heavy laden w/ necessities. I'm a master packer owing both to years on the road & my father's DNA. The amount of stuff he could pack in a closet was frightening. Those who have experienced my packing chops no longer disagree when I say, "It will fit."

Ravi had to ride home on his pillow that was about 12 inches higher than usual. He is glad to be home & has been a good traveler.

I was glad to enjoy some fellowship w/ stranded attendees at Zoom Church on Sunday, making the most of technical difficulties. It is amazing how much is accomplished at my little Church, thanks to all our selfless volunteers. I look forward to being at the live event on Sundays soon.

That is all the news for now. Best wishes & prayers go out to you.

Lina

April 9, 2023 ☺ Resurrection, renewal, spring ☺ Lina:

It is a beautiful spring day for Easter. The sunshine feels so good. Ravi's run and his pooh corner in the yard are now full of green grass that used to be the yellow sod. I have an old plug-in lawn mower under the shed. It's been years since it's been active. I guess I'll explore whether it still works.

I'm three or so days into more exercise. I have been pulling weeds for

30-60 minutes several days a week for the past two weeks, rain permitting. The green bin is overflowing with yard waste. I've walked up the hill route around the block twice. I think I made 4 miles yesterday. I'm tired & don't feel like doing it, but I feel good after I've done the extra 30 minutes of stretches (I need those to keep from aching from yard work), core strengthening stuff & walking. I did the flat route yesterday, around the block past our new eateries & pubs on 24th & 27th that have opened along with the multiple new mega apartment complexes. When I got back home Ravi & Rand were heading out for a walk, so I went up the hill with them because I had only walked 15 minutes by then. I had 3.7 miles in by the time I got back home again.

I made arrangements to fly to Burbank at the end of the month for my CT & PET scans. I am strong enough to drag my suitcase & walk to the airport to the car rental. I won't have any sedation, so I'm going it alone. Rand & Ravi will stay home. I will fly home after the scans & only be gone overnight.

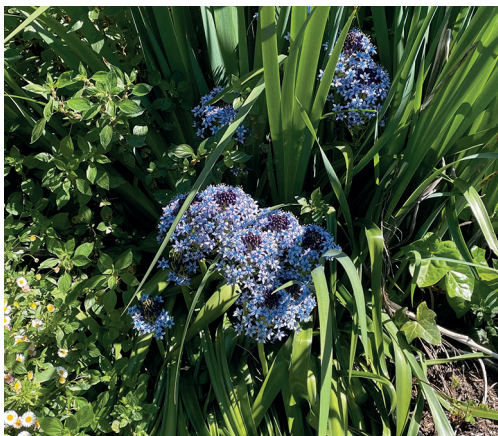
My brother's insurance denied his treatment for prostate cancer by proton therapy at Loma Linda hospital. The appeal is underway. My other brother and his wife have made the move from WA state to Las Vegas. He is retiring now by the end of the year, pushed back a bit from his April retirement plan.

Anne Marie's memorial (she was a pillar of my church) on Friday March 31 was so full of love. She taught Sunday school for years and all the former kids, now in their 50's, and their parents shared many stories. Judy Gough, my former law partner, came down with one of her daughters & stayed with her other daughter in Hayward. Both daughters grew up with Ann Marie's Sunday school class & boundless patience. We all ended up going to dinner that evening.

It's not surprising that there is so much loneliness. The long relationships of shared experience seem to be hard to grow in today's transient sharing options. Generations of shared experience were the norm in schools, churches, jobs and neighborhoods. Now many rely on social media to stay connected as we move on in the busyness of keeping up with demands. It's so easy to lose all that goes with shared experiences. It is interesting that we are in a time of growing awareness of our connectedness & the attrition of environments that grew our relationships in the



Spring finery.



Weeds and flowers.

The nose knows?

We used to have reciprocal dog-sitting arrangements with selected chums, but in the years of Ravi's decline he had become so frail, and required such a high degree of maintenance, that we could no longer in good conscience presume upon them. Fortunately one may apply to family for indulgences one would hesitate to solicit of friends, and my brother Greg (who had already, of course, gone above and beyond during Lina's surgery) cheerfully stepped into the breach. It didn't hurt that Ravi, by nature a trusting creature, also adored Greg. Given that a dog's olfactory tissues, flattened out, would be the size of a tablecloth (yours and mine would amount to a couple of handkerchiefs), we may speculate that a certain family resemblance was also reassuring, nosewise, to the creature.

past. It's amazing how we adapt. Rand is making bbq ribs for dinner. I hope you are sharing your connections with loved ones &/or feel the love of those who are not with you now, but are thinking of you.

Lina

April 21, 2023 ☞ *A mix of weeds & flowers* ☞ Lina:

I've been doing something productive each day to put things in order & doing my exercise routine. It's getting easier, although I must push myself to get started. I spend 30 minutes to an hour working at the weed removal & general gardening. The artichokes are popping despite neglect. I put in some thyme, basil & cilantro seeds yesterday. Gardening gets my average heart rate up to 102 or better. Stretching follows yard work & walking 2 or more miles rounds out the program. I'm grateful to be able.

Next Wednesday I have the post-surgery scans. The results will dictate the road forward for this year. I will at least know whether the cancer is gone for now or still present. The LA trip will be a quick turnaround, flying in & out w/ overnight at the condo that is still available currently. If all is well, Rand & I hope to get away for a week vacation, visiting friends in Puerto Vallarta. Rand's brother has agreed to watch Ravi. He is a saint.

Ravi had taken a downward spiral two weeks ago. He was limping & could barely walk, due to a pinched nerve in his neck as it turned out. We thought he was a goner, but his vet pulled him through again. Amazing how well he is doing now. We would not leave him w/ anyone but Greg. Ravi loves him & Greg is able to attend to him.

It is a beautiful day here in Oakland. Rand & I walked to a local sports bar last night to watch Game 3. It was a lively venue, fun but I can't help but worry about COVID. It didn't kill me last June, but it's still a worry. I wear a mask indoors, but nobody else seems to, especially sports fans. I can't decide whether to get another booster. It's hard to know whether another booster would be beneficial or not & recommendations, based on Canadian & other data, recommend it for 80 years & older, living in a congregate setting. I had a booster 6 months ago. I will ask my doctor, but probably will get it. I send my prayers to you for a beautiful & fulfilling spring.

Lina

April 27, 2023 🌀 *Not outta the woods* 🌀 **Lina:**

I got my blood test results back & my CA125 (cancer antigen) is up again from 81 in March, to 322.2. Not a good trend. In January it was 18, within the normal 0-35 range. The results of yesterday's PET & CT scans are not back yet. My oncologist is out of the office until Monday, but my surgeon is on it. The scans are purported to light up any cancer cells. So, the results should show the source of the antigen creating culprit(s).

Meanwhile, Rand & I are headed to Mexico for a week, as planned. Greg is sitting Ravi, who seems to be back to his usual elderly self, able to get up, take walks & eat enthusiastically.

Yesterday's airline odyssey was difficult. It was a long way to the rental car dragging my 2 bags, despite wheels. Much harder than Costco. I was tired, but I made it home after several hours waiting on my delayed South-west flight. I got home about 8pm & Rand made Porcini-truffle raviolis from Market Hall. After the 48 hour ultra-low carb diet, no morning coffee, & pre-scan fasting I needed some calories.

We have some last minute travel stuff to do. I need Kodiak buttermilk pancake mix from Piedmont G & other unavailable food items to take with. Kodiak makes wonderful banana muffins & bananas abound in Mexico.

Be well & patient,
Lina

April 27, 2023 🌀 *Update* 🌀 **Lina:**

My surgeon called. The tumors are back. I go back to LA, a week from Monday. He said we still have many options. We will make a plan when I see him a week from Tuesday. Meanwhile, chill & enjoy life. I intend to do just that.

May 3, 2023 🌀 *Oh, oh, Mexico* 🌀 **Lina:**

Thank you for all the encouragement & love. My oncologist just returned from his vacation today. I haven't spoken to him yet, but I sent an email asking a few preliminary questions about whether it's likely that I will have chemo next week. I think he mentioned previously some form of oral chemo as a follow up.



"We don't have to take this." The view from the balcony at Playa Punta Negra, where our friend Robert I. Williams has maintained a vacation spot for a couple of decades, and which we visited many times beginning with our honeymoon in 2005.



At Lina's urging we ducked into a sports bar in Puerto Vallarta so that she, a longtime basketball fan, could catch a playoff game.



Relaxing on the Malecón in Puerto Vallarta's "Old Town."



We visited the Jorullo Bridge across the Cuale River outside of town, 500 feet over the stream; about 1500 feet from end to end.



Spurning the ATVs on offer, Lina made the roundtrip on foot.



Being at the top of the food chain carries with it certain responsibilities. We had not expected, when we ordered ribs at a nearby BBQ, that each one would be about the size of a riot baton.

Rand & I are digesting the recurrence news. It is good to be away in the beauty of nature & the beauty the people here, so kind & happy, by all we have encountered. We went into town for the Warriors v Lakers game 1 & plan to do the same tomorrow night. We hiked across a cool suspension bridge today & are generally enjoying walks on the beach. We have been coming here since our honeymoon in September '05. Our hosts are long-time friends, always up for big fun and flexible.

We have three more days of leisure before we return to the path that God has for me. We leave for LA on Monday for my appointments on Tuesday. The usual condo routine, but we will need a few kitchen essentials & linens. I'm getting plenty of exercise of my packing chops.

Ravi has been doing fine w/ Greg. Answered prayer.

I will let you know what's next. Love to you.

Lina

May 9, 2023 ☞ Back in LA to generate more data ☞ Lina:

We made it home from Mexico with unusual ease. Since our prior trip there in November 2021, the travel requirements have eased considerably. No arrival forms to complete, no preflight COVID test required & once you submit to required facial recognition, global entry allowed us to avoid long, long lines at customs upon re-entry. Worth it.

Today, I saw my doctors today & gave blood. The quick return of my cancer is proof of its aggressiveness. I start a "standard of care" treatment in 1 week that consists of oral medication to stomp the production of forming blood vessels that feed the cancer & IV infusions to stimulate the immune system into overdrive. Meanwhile, we & my doctors will be exploring clinical trials that may be available outside Cedars. The treatment has side effects, but no port is required this time.

We will head home tomorrow & return next week, bringing some dishes back. Paper plates have their limits. At least we brought coffee cups & had recourse to the cutlery we left behind in a box here, intending to give it to my brother later.

We resumed the condo rental, dragged the antenna up from the garage, restarted wifi service & brought a comfy chair among the items we could

fit in the car. The rugs & carpet pads are down again to prevent dog slip-page. Sheets & towels deployed & provisions stored in the usual places. We can freeze much of the food we brought expecting to stay for up to 3 weeks.

I will return May 15 for the first infusion & every 3 weeks after that, until... Who knows. We will learn as we go along. I'm still feeling much better than when we started in July last year, or even December. I feel the symptomatic fatigue, but still feel strong.

The trip down yesterday was efficient, but hard on Ravi sitting in the back seat for so long. When we arrived around 4:30 pm, he was walking w/ difficulty sideways & I fell over him trying to help him by lifting him with his harness. I caught myself, palms out as I fell into the gutter, dry though. I'm aching (neck & shoulders) w/ bruised palms, but nothing serious. He is much better today, walking normally.

We expect gentle weather tomorrow & will not be here as temperatures hit the 90s. I'm grateful for the thoughtful notes, messages & encouragement.

Love,
Lina

May 10, 2023 ☞ *Home again, home again* ☞ Lina:

The drive home took an hour longer than the drive down due to traffic leaving town & more frequent stops for Ravi. He did much better, no wobbly legs; vigorous appetite. We left our clothes there & brought back the food.

I got my lab results from yesterday's blood draw. My cancer antigen marker, CA-125, is up to 461, a slowish rise. The marker was over 2000 last July. I guess that is why I still feel so much better still.

This morning, I started trying to line up coverage for the drugs that are necessary for the regimen, without delaying availability & the start of treatment next Monday. It is a whole complex thing to see whether my Kaiser insurance will cover it or whether I can get Medicare part D now that will cover it, or part. I feel like I'm safely in God's hands. Answered prayer.

Make mine Lenvima

News at the end of April that "the tumors are back" could have cast a pall on our Mexican hegira, but Lina resolved to have a good time. Back home, it was down to business. We were of course surprised that the foe, which had appeared knocked back on its heels at the turning of the year, had sprung back with such alacrity: even Dr. Ponec had seemed to think it might lie doggo for as long as a year or two. The patient and her team set about exploring other therapeutic options. One possibility was a newish drug called "Lenvima." – "Could be costly, though," Dr. Ponec warned us. How costly? "I'm not sure. Maybe two thousand dollars a month?"

Couple of grand a month, hey? Well, we thought, we can handle that. Have to cut down on those wild nights out on the town, and for certain no more jetting off weekends for the Côte d'Azur, but yeah, certain household economies can be made. Turns out that Dr. Ponec, bless him, spends more time perusing medical journals than he does scrutinizing the annual reports of Big Pharma, because a month's course of Lenvima retails for a cool 25 large. Consideration was given to re-encumbering The Crumbling Manse™, bad news for our heirs, perhaps, but after all, you can't take it with you. (*continued next page*)



"Be an artichoke": Lina's homegrown harvest.

Lenvima, continued

But Lina – in this as in so many other respects very much her father's daughter – was disposed to look for an angle, and discovered on her own that the Lenvima patentholder maintains a "foundation" for hard-luck cases (myself, I'd think that *anyone* with "advanced metastatic peritoneal carcinomatosis" would count as unlucky), and applied for a discount. This, as she describes in the following entry, was forthcoming in the amount of...100%. And there was much rejoicing. The drug was not a "miracle cure" – as L observes, it's effective in about a third of the cases, which means that the other two-thirds are SOL, but in her case it was to deliver relief for a few months until later in the year when, between waning efficacy and increasing side effects, she was obliged to discontinue it.

I was able to change my dental cleaning from next week to tomorrow. Then, I anticipate many phone calls to determine prescription coverage. I'm so grateful for your prayers & encouragement. I think Rand & I are both feeling more ready to deal with this setback.

Love,
Lina

May 14, 2023 ❖ *Artichoke in the garden jungle* ❖ **Lina:**

My education in U.S. healthcare continues. I met w/ my doctors last Tuesday & my oncologist prescribed treatment w/ oral medication to attack the cancer's DNA & an infusion to put my immune system into overdrive.

I am scheduled to start the 2nd-effort treatment Tuesday w/ infusion at Cedars. The two-part regimen requires that I obtain Lenvima, a pill that retails for \$25,000 for a month supply, and I must take it daily concurrent w/ infusion every 3 weeks. I can purchase Lenvima from a Canadian company for about \$10,000 per month. But, it takes 2-4 weeks to ship & I don't have the means.

But wait, Kaiser may cover it through our insurance, if a Kaiser doctor orders it through Kaiser's mail order pharmacy. I have an appointment Monday morning with my Kaiser oncologist to see whether she will order it. But mail order may take 7-10 days to arrive. So, we don't know whether I must postpone the infusion & delay our planned departure Monday after my appointment at Kaiser.

Wow, I've been training for flexibility & trusting God. That's good because the process could be maddening. I must let it go & adjust to God's plan. It feels right & I'm not spending my energy on being frustrated or anxious. It's God's grace. I could not feel this way through resolve. Friends & family are shocked & annoyed on my behalf. I pray they will let it go.

Meanwhile, back in the garden, I plan to extricate the lawnmower that is under the shed behind the jungle foliage. I don't know whether I have the jam, but I might. Ravi's runs are 2 feet high now.

On one side of our garden grows the artichoke that has been growing in a recycle bin since I reclaimed the backyard as pandemic therapy in

early 2020. That little plant is so determined. It keeps giving me artichokes. So, now I'm hoping to be that tough for another season in this amazing world. Be an artichoke.

I still feel relatively strong & ready to change according to my options. Thank you all for the love ping prayers & support you send.

Love,
Lina

May 15, 2023 ❧ *Wow. Just wow.* ❧ Lina:

God is good.

So, I applied to the drug manufacturer's foundation to get the pills for free, on the off chance that our income was not too high. My application was granted & FedEx will deliver it tomorrow, & free to the end of the year.

I also met w/ the Kaiser oncologist who said she would order the prescription if I switched my care to Kaiser with the second infusion in June. The pharmacy will call me to arrange delivery. There is a copayment of about \$300 [per monthly dose —*Ed.*].

This was all happening this morning. First, the foundation rep. called as I was pulling into the Kaiser parking lot to tell me he had my application & would let me know today about the approval. Then I saw the Kaiser oncologist who was very informative about providing the same regimen as Cedars.

When the foundation guy called, I told him that Kaiser would provide it w/ the copayment. He said you're approved, so I'd hate to have you pay *anything*. Wow, OK. I have not heard from the Kaiser pharmacy yet, but I don't have to worry about timing. I have options for receiving treatment in Oakland & can weigh those without the option for ongoing treatment with my team being foreclosed by the drug costs.

We are at the condo now. We arrived at about 7:00, safe & sound. Traveling mercies. Rand is making salmon & zucchini, yum. I start my Ketruda infusion tomorrow at 10:00. Rand & Ravi will wait for FedEx. Answered prayers. I'm grateful.

One thing my Kaiser oncologist said is that this new regimen is suc-



View from an infusion: Cedars-Sinai facility on Ventura Blvd.

cessful about 36% of the time. The odds are not w/me, but the prayers are. Thank you.

Love to you,
Lina

May 16, 2023 ☺ Yum yum ☺ Lina:

Everything went smoothly today. I had the infusion. It took about 45 minutes. I gave blood. Rand was at the condo to receive the delivery & I started taking the 14 mg dose. No side effects yet.

I'm heating up the lasagne that Rand's local friends who were on our high school newspaper together gave to us. Add a side of steamed broccoli & carrots, bread w/ olive oil & you're talking yum yum.

My oncologist stopped by while I was having my infusion. He recommended that I hang around until my appointment next Tuesday. So that's what we are planning. That will give me some time to see my brother & strategize getting his cancer treatment for which his insurance denied coverage.

Thank you again for your prayers, kind words & encouragement.

Love,
Lina

May 20, 2023 ☺ Is it only Day 5? ☺ Lina:

Still here in Northridge, eating & resting. It seems that a shift happened between yesterday & today. My joint pain, nausea & stomach cramps were gone when I woke up this morning. Not much change in the fatigue level but some easing I think. I take that as evidence that the cancer is again on the run. In my mind, I picture it shriveled w/ burned edges.

We are looking forward to brunch w/ my brothers, niece & grand niece tomorrow in Oxnard. Tuesday I will see my oncologist & get a reading on my CA125 level.

I've lacked energy since starting treatment & before that, but I have managed to keep up my exercises. It is minimal, but I feel better after I exercise. That 10 minute walk after dinner does help the digestion. We

continue to eat well. My appetite is low, but I snack all day.

Not very exciting news, but I'm in power saving mode.

Love to you.

Lina

May 24, 2023 🌸 *Home yet again* 🌸 **Lina:**

We got a late start yesterday after I saw my doctor at about 10:00 & gave blood. I just lacked the jam to finish cleaning & packing the night before. I also tried to forget my phone & sweatshirt that I removed while vacuuming. Fortunately, I realized when we were dropping off my ice cream at our friend's house. We lost an hour though. We got home at about 9:30. I fed Ravi & made leftover tacos while Rand unloaded the car & walked the dog. We all got plenty of exercise.

This morning I got my test results from yesterday's blood. My CA125 was down to 352.7 from 640.9. I'm going the right way & can tell that I feel better. The side effects of my current immunotherapy are milder than the first 4 days. The drug costs are covered by the manufacturer until next May. And, my youngest brother starts his cancer treatment next week. (answered prayer!). What a difference from last week. If I could just give up worrying & remember, He's "got this." But, at least I realize God's power, understand & yield to his will. This is by grace. It does help me to refocus on the tasks at hand & not worry mostly.

My brothers & I went through various things that the youngest plans to sell to cover treatment costs. He has about a month before he has to pay the \$20,000+ for the second phase & our step-dad will loan him the money in the interim, if necessary, bc it is strictly money up front. Medicare, would apparently cover it, but his insurance will not & he's only 64. Waiting is not an option. I'm so relieved.

We are barely unpacking before we head for [Redacted] Creek on the American River for the Memorial Day weekend. We are looking forward to spending quality time w/ friends & just relaxing over BBQ & other yummy offerings. Rand is a master BBQ-er [*my blushes* -Ed.] & Gail is a great cook too, so we all will be practicing our strengths in the kitchen & following our rule that the person who cooks is not allowed to do dishes. The place is dog friendly & they love it there, sleeping on the deck &



Oxnard, CA: Lina's niece, grand-niece, dog, kid brother.

"Strictly money up front"

Proton beam therapy is a relatively new and, by the accounts I've read, promising treatment for prostate cancer, but of course the cold-eyed functionaries at Big Health, whose bonuses depend on "keeping costs down," are disposed to regard it as experimental, and to deny any outlay that would hurt the shareholders' fee-fees. I'm pleased to report that David underwent (no thanks to his HMO) the treatment, which appears to have had a happy outcome.



Rustic rest and repose: The dacha at Redacted Creek.



I did say "rustic."



The American River, just east of Redacted Creek.

strolling down to the creek for a drink, and of course receiving praise & love from their many admirers.

Love to all,
Lina

May 27, 2023 ☺ *Rest and repose* ☺ Lina:

Ahh, we are at the river. It is so peaceful & mild. We arrived yesterday at about 11:30 am. There was intermittent afternoon rain w/ patches of sunshine. The river & surrounding creeks are running high fast & very cold. Rand usually takes his beach chair out in the river to sit neck deep for prolonged periods. I don't think that even Rand is up for full immersion.

I swept the deck & stairs yesterday, but Rand & Gail did the heavy lifting, dinner prep. (meatloaf, artichokes from my garden & couscous w/ sour-dough batard, shutter removal & unloading the car. I'm feeling good today, but still I'm just lounging. I did walk the dogs separately this morning & accumulated about a mile of steps by 7:00 am. I slept well, to the sound of rushing water in the creek about 50' below. It's all white water here.

I'm taking my Lenvima daily & it feels like those shriveled up cancer cells are no longer making headway. It is usual to follow this intervention for a year or more.

Rand just got back after his turn at the dog walk & reported that 3 Sheriffs came down the road to take a burglar into custody who had been subdued by a cabin owner. Five other cabins had been broken into the day before & the thief had piled up his booty for later retrieval. This is a busy tract of cabins (about 20 cabins) on Memorial Day. So, what was the thief thinking, "nice day to burgle some cabins"? I guess it is part of the current sense of lawlessness. Too sad.

We are fortunate to have the options we do. We hope such places & experiences are not foreclosed to average folks. Certainly, these rough cabins on long term leases from the forest service, since the 1920's are less available to average folks as time moves on. This cabin used to belong to Bill Bailey, a labor organizer in San Francisco, who lived in an "Earthquake Cottage" on Telegraph Hill. Those are gone now. History is much more interesting now that I'm older. It never ceases to amaze me how history & human behavior is repeated, again & again. Maybe one day we will

figure out how to remember the lessons of history.

Hoping for your joyous weekend,
Lina

June 1, 2023 ☞ *Of, among other things, doggy digestion* ☞ Lina:

Home to the busy city life, which is already in progress. I have a pile of time-sensitive details on my desk to address. It is strange when every day is kind of a weekend, but business activities don't conform to that construction.

I'm in the process of getting lab work from Kaiser for it to use when I have my next Keytruda infusion next Tuesday. Kaiser staff keeps telling me that I can just walk in. That means walk in & prepare to wait in line. I made an appointment for tomorrow, but I will try the walk-in today, given the delay I've experienced from Kaiser getting test results. I'm supposed to get the blood work at least 2 days before the infusion, but there don't seem to be parameters for when is too early. We will see how the infusions go at Kaiser & will continue if it is manageable. I go back to LA for PET & CT scans in late July. Meanwhile, my doctors at Cedars will continue to follow & monitor my progress. I'm waiting to hear back from the manufacturer's foundation on getting the 1st refill for my Lenvima. My weight remains 101#.

We completed many tasks yesterday, 3 loads of laundry, car wash, & modest weeding in the garden to restore access to Ravi's grass areas in back. Ravi had his acupuncture treatment & blood work yesterday too. This morning, he had us up at 4:30, prompted by a pungent olfactory warning of things to come. We were glad that Rand got him outside prior to any containment failure. Not so lucky later in the morning, so we resumed Flagyl, which treats Ravi's periodic loose bowel problem. Too much salmon skin maybe. Too much information probably. The lesson: Old age is not for wimps, be they dog or human.

On June 7, my brother, David, starts his cancer treatment with injections of a gel to buffer the proton radiation area and markers. He has an MRI the next day, but he needs to go to the San Diego area, from Ventura, for his treatment. Weekly proton radiation happens about 3 weeks after that for 5 days a week. The schedule will be difficult given that he operates an

auto electric business. But the side effects and potential risks are so much less than with regular radiation & surgery. I'm just relieved that things are moving forward now.

I continue to be blessed w/ answered prayer, from safe travels & my healing to my brother's treatment. I also receive encouragement often from my church family, friends and family family. The young are also an inspiration. Thank you all so much.

Lina

June 4, 2023 ☽ *I love Sunday* ☽ Lina:

...I know many who suffer the Sunday night knot of dread in anticipation of the work week, but I feel renewed. Today is a sad Sunday though because my mom died 8 years ago today. It seems so long ago, but at the same time it seems like I last spoke with her a short time ago. Communion Sunday was restorative even on Zoom.

I've been ticking off items on my time sensitive task list. I need to get my van smogged on Monday to complete the registration by Tuesday when the current one expires.

Yesterday I got another new battery, filled the van with gas & added Seafoam to blow out any build up that could make it fail smog. Assuming it passes, I can get my new tags on Tuesday morning before my afternoon infusion at Kaiser. I also made a dent in the laundry.

Also yesterday, Bill Beatty brought over a loaf of his fabulous whole wheat & oat raisin bread. It is dense & yummy w/ butter & cinnamon. That should fatten me up some. I will just rest after Tuesday & pray for the medications to stomp those cancer cells.

Wednesday, my brother starts his treatment. I corrected my error of reporting the date as being in July in my last post. It is June 1. Thanks to my brother Bill for his help keeping things together.

Our friends Robert & Rebecca got back from their place in Puerto Vallarta June 1. We were there with them just a month ago & that seems much longer ago. Rand & I have found our sense of time is distorted since COVID. R&R are coming over tomorrow for board games & maybe a walk to one of the new dinner options nearby, if we can find one opened

on Monday. So, that should inspire me to finish putting away the stuff piled up in the kitchen from our trip to the river. Robert will help me try to figure out the replacement hinge for the kitchen cabinet too.

That's the news for now. I'm basking in the peace of Christ.

Love to you,

Lina

June 11, 2023 ❧ *Rough* ❧ Lina:

Kind of rough this past week. I developed a sore inside my lower eyelid & was directed to suspend the Lenvima over the week. Today I've had a headache & needed to take my antiemetic twice. I felt better w/ Tylenol & had my morning coffee with shortbread cookies at noon. I missed Zoom church as I napped through the morning.

Last Tuesday I had my second infusion of Keytruda. I gave blood again bc Kaiser did not run tests for my CA125. I still don't know the results. Hopefully, I will get the results tomorrow.

I'm planning to go to LA on June 21 in my van. My brother Bill is driving w/ me. I'm leaving my van w/ my youngest brother, David, so he can use it to camp in San Diego during his 5 day a week proton treatments that start June 26 & run for 5 weeks.

Please pray for August, a newborn who is in neonatal intensive care after an emergency c-section. She is my brother Bill's step-grandchild. Pray that her recovery is complete & peace for her parents & family members that are struggling & for guidance for her doctors.

God's peace to you,

Lina

June 13, 2023 ❧ *Threescore and ten* ❧ Lina:

Another year begins. I've completed 70. I could not imagine living to 70 when I was young.

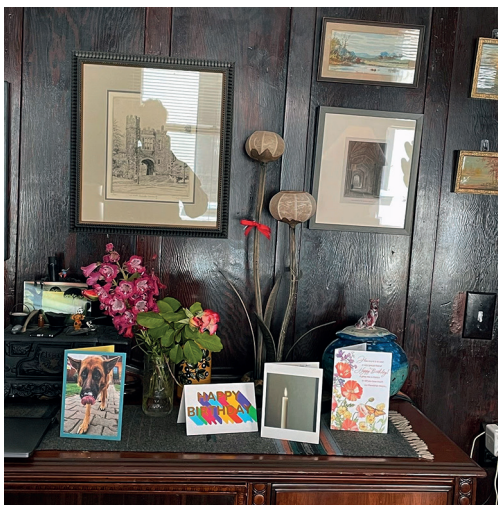
I got my CA125 measure yesterday. It is 147 according to the oncology nurse. Apparently my doctor receives the results in 24 hours but Kaiser does not send CA125 results to the patient without special arrangements. I made arrangements w/ my Kaiser to get the results when she receives them.



The Great White Whale, Lina's 1996 Dodge van. It served as her brother David's home away from home as he underwent treatment.



Birthday girl...



...and birthday cards.

I started back on the Lenvima today after a televisit w/ my oncologist this morning. She explained the details of her analysis to me. I saw a Kaiser ophthalmologist yesterday who concluded that my eye blisters were calazia, clogged oil gland, basically like a sty but inside rather than on the edge of the eyelid. My oncologist believes the blisters were not caused by the Lenvima & explained the importance of Lenvima in my treatment regimen based on my cancer type. Her analysis was well reasoned & informed. This journey is an education.

I needed to reschedule my PET/CT scan to precede my 4th infusion cycle. I ended up scheduling the scans to be done in Oakland at Kaiser rather than in LA at Radnet, where I had planned to have it done. It took quite an effort to get clarity on which scans were ordered. After my doctor visit today, I was able to determine that two separate events were not needed to gather the type of information the doctors needed. So having the PET/CT, rather than a PET & CT scan, is the one I need & that Kaiser can do.

My newborn grand-niece is doing better, but it has been a bumpy entry into the world. Thank you for continuing prayer for her full recovery from her traumatic birth & God's peace particularly for her Parents & grandparents.

I head down to LA to see my Cedar's doctors on June 22 w/ my brother Bill. I don't have plans to go down there again as of now.

I am so blessed. Thank you.

Lina

June 25, 2023 ☺ *Time marches on pretty fast* ☺ Lina:

It has been a long stretch since my last post because of the busyness. I got my van cleaned up for my brother to use for his trips to San Diego for his proton therapy. He will camp down there for his first cycle that starts tomorrow. He dropped me at the train station for my return trip.

My other brother flew into Oakland last Monday & drove down w/ me in my van. I picked him up at the airport & we were on the road by 9:15 am Monday, the 21st. It was good of him to fly into Oakland given his vow to never come to Oakland after he, his wife, Rand & I were mugged by armed teens at dinner during a takeover robbery when he came to visit about 10 years ago [fifteen, but who's counting? See sidebar. -Ed.]. We had a good drive & his company was a gift.

I saw my doctors at Cedars on last Tuesday. I am grateful for their care. This Tuesday, I'm having the infusion part of my immunotherapy regimen at Kaiser but its process is a challenge. It makes accessing care a full time job. But, it is local & it is the same infusion treatment.

I got back home on the train on Friday night. Rand picked me up at Jack London. Saturday I got blood tests. Tomorrow I have an EKG & Tuesday I get infusion four. I have PET & CT scans in LA on July 11 & infusion 4 on July 18. I'm waiting to hear about my CA125 from the draw yesterday. Hopefully it is still trending down.

I'm blessed with the encouragement from my Church family, family & friends. Thank you!

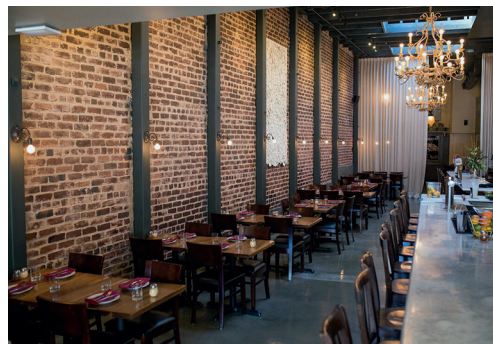
Lina

July 1, 2023 ☽ *Accretion* ☽ **Lina:**

There are layers of buildup for each decade & many imported layers from family & various pursuits. We are planning to reverse this life-long trend. But then again, I am my father's daughter. His "War Room" was awe inspiring, a collection of junk, valuable items & military stuff; lots of guns.

Rand & I are mentally ready to take on the task of ditching all our layers of useless "STUFF." We are starting outside with the overflow of "stuff" piled outside like spare tire, filing cabinets covered in plastic, bags of paper & plastic bags, 1/2 cans of paint, plaster & our dead mail box from last year. We then must pull the weeds to arrange a staging area in the back yard for the purge & dealing with the storage shed circa 2014.

I have not had to be at Kaiser for one thing or another since Wednesday. From Saturday to Wednesday last week it was full-time issues with labs & medications. The upshot, I'm back on Lenvima after a one-day suspension; and the three-day suspension of it for the eye thing two weeks ago resulted in my CA125 reading going up from 147 to 173. I have my next blood work & CA125 measure within 3 days before my next infusion on July 18. I've had ample opportunity to work on letting go of stress & trusting God, with many short falls in the area of letting go. I'm mindful of the power of prayer, & the importance of remembering gratitude & recognizing the blessings.



Scene of the crime.

Yeah, about that...

In April 2008 Lina's brother Bill and his charming wife Lisa were down from metro Seattle, where they dwelt at the time, and the group decided that we'd stroll (really, more of a hike) down to "Milano," a restaurant on Grand Avenue. At table Bill was going on about what a hellhole of crime Oakland was, and I had loftily told him that here, as in so many other matters, his head was lodged. It was accordingly deeply mortifying when four teenagers stormed in to rob the joint just after we settled the bill. Because I had risen to my feet before I'd quite grasped the gravity of the situation, I briefly had the barrel of a TEC-9 pressed against my right occipital lobe by one of the teens. It was a strangely low-bandwidth experience, so no PTSD to speak of (for me, at least).

Bill and Lisa, perhaps understandably, tended to leave Oakland off their itineraries for several years after that.

On Monday I started blood pressure medication because the Lenvima had caused it to rise too high. I have always had good blood pressure, 120/65 for those who have experience with BP. For the past weeks it has been up to 175/102, not good. High blood pressure begets all manner of other problems. So, welcome Amlodipine.

I had my 3rd Ketruda infusion last Tuesday & started taking magnesium, for a slight deficiency per my last blood test. I learned all about what magnesium does by researching on the Internet, but nobody at Kaiser discussed the order with me as to why the prescribed amount is advisable for me.

I head back down to LA for PET/CT & a CT scans on July 12 and doctors' appointments the next day. I am so grateful to have my ongoing consultations w/ Drs. P & M. I've had one face-to-face with my Kaiser oncologist, and that was before treatment started with Kaiser, mid-May. I receive messages & instructions from support staff & anonymous people identified as "my care staff." They mostly inform me well. However, I've had conflicting instructions, especially when my oncology nurse contact told me to suspend Lenvima because of my sty. Then my Kaiser oncologist told me three days later that she would not have recommended that. I had assumed that the nurse consulted with her supervising oncologist, before making such an important change. It does not give me confidence. But, the experience reminds me to be diligent about being fully informed & ensuring that I agree with the direction my treatment takes. It does not appear to be the Kaiser way but if I agitate they come along. Trusting God does not relieve me from my obligation to listen to God & try to do the right thing.

David, my brother, has completed his first of five proton sessions. He did not camp this week because he found a cheap hotel. He is hoping that his grant for reimbursement by the American Cancer Society will come through to cover lodging during treatment. He feels pretty good but is having fatigue side effects. He is working on the weekend days when he is home. So the only rest he gets is on his days of treatment in San Diego. It is arduous.

Judy Gough might visit me next weekend. I reflect often on all the love that people send to me, known & unknown. The encouragement I receive

is really up-lifting. I'm so used to thinking "I" can do stuff on my own when really I need your fellowship & encouragement. It's one of those things that should be obvious but isn't. Thanks for the love. I think God smiles.

The dog cookie container, circa 2015, had dog cookies with a best-by date in 2017. It is cleaned out now & can be made useful. Unfortunately my refrigerator & pantry need the same purging. Lots of work to do.

Love to you,
Lina

July 13, 2023 ❧ *Encouraging reports* ❧ Lina:

I had my scans Tuesday & met w/ my doctors yesterday, Wednesday, to check me out & discuss the scans. Basically, all of the tumors that had appeared per the scans on April 27 are significantly smaller. Some are gone. My immunotherapy regimen has been very effective. So, I will be continuing with it indefinitely.

My next infusion is Tuesday. Labs are tomorrow & Saturday. My blood pressure is now way better 117/75. So, the Amlodipine is working. I resist pills, but this is a new life & a new way.

I don't need to go back to LA until October 25. Meanwhile, my job is eating & appreciating life. I assume I will continue with the Keytruda infusion every three weeks & daily Lenvima.

My brother David, is undergoing his proton therapy & has about 2 more weeks of that. He reports that he is feeling good & the expectation is that he will be cancer free going forward. They discovered it in early stages.

Rand & Ravi held down the fort in my absence. Both are doing fine. Special thanks to Chris, Marji, Ben, Gary & my other church family member for their ongoing encouragement, thoughts & love in care cards. I hope to see you in person soon.

I should have a measure of my CA125 by Tuesday, although I am supposed to have it Monday. That's all the news for now.

Love to all,
Lina



"It is cleaned out now & can be made useful." Umm...



Ravi holding down the fort. He is also holding down a "whelping pad," a product I warmly endorse for incontinent geriatric dogs.

July 21, 2023 ☺ *Are things moving more slowly?* ☺ Lina:

It seems like things are taking longer to move forward.

Last week I was in LA Monday through Wednesday, where I had scans showing "significant" reduction in the tumor sizes. Some were gone & a "suspicious" lymph node had appeared.

This past week, I had my 4th infusion cycle & various labs at Kaiser. My CA125 had increased to 233 from 173. Mixed bag. This all reminds me that this treatment is part of the long game that requires daily attention but the daily bits of information do not offer insight into my prognosis. Is this a reminder to let go & let God? I sense that it is a reminder that my control over this, like so much, is fantasy. The thing is I feel more happy or content with the acceptance. Really, I would be constantly overwhelmed if I tried to manage the pieces. The peace of acceptance is a blessing.

My oldest brother, Bill, is planning a family get together in mid-August, in Las Vegas, at his new digs. I've been going back & forth about this timing & the fact that a significant number of family members cannot come at that time. I'm not sure I can do the airport & related travel in 110 degrees & Rand will need to stay home to attend to Ravi. It would be nice to see my sister & stepdad & I've made my reservation, but it may not happen.

David, younger brother, has 2 more weeks of cancer treatment in San Diego & really cannot afford to take more time off work for a weekend in Vegas. He has been trying to earn his living with only weekends at his auto electric shop. I don't expect that he can afford a trip to Las Vegas. Still, his prognosis is good for full recovery. His son & daughter would like to go to Vegas, but the cost is quite a burden.

Life is so interesting when I think about what God is trying to show us for the path forward.

Meanwhile, I saw Demariay yesterday when I went to Kaiser to pick up the discs of my PET/CT & CT scans from last week in LA, which I had dropped off for downloading into the Kaiser system the day before. He is the person who helped me last June. He remembered me & said, "I still have got you, always."

Wow, what an amazing human. I thanked him again & told him how amazing he is. Everyone in the records department loves him & one remarked

that Demariay taught him everything & was his hero. Demariay said he expected me to live at least as long as him (He's around 30 I'm guessing). I told him I will see him in heaven in any case. We shared a high 5.

There is so much power out there in the love people have in their hearts & those times of sharing. Our high-density city life provides so many opportunities to see God's face. Not only that, but perfect BBQ weather too. Rand will do his wonders tonight & I suspect that Ravi will get some steak bits in the end. Ravi is doing well.

Love & prayers to you.

Lina

August 2, 2023 ☺ *Are things moving more slowly?* ☺ Lina:

It's Rand's birthday. I made cheese blintzes with blueberries & strawberries for breakfast & we are stuffed. Rand's brother Greg is coming to spend the night & celebrate. Even though it's his Bday, we're making Rand BBQ steaks for dinner (he does amazing BBQ) & I'm going to try to bake a cake. I know enough now to not try the whole wheat flour. I could not find a mix that did not include baking powder with cornstarch, so we shall see how my improvisation goes. I got coco & frozen raspberries but we might end up using with garnished & frosted brownies. My past cake efforts have not been very good. But we have ice cream & raspberries. So we will enjoy ice cream with birthday candles if necessary.

The days are ticking along. I've been doing a bit in the garden. I planted a zucchini 2 days ago. It's rather late in the season I guess but maybe the season started late this year because it did not get warm in Oakland until late June. Still I've only planted two tomato plants, the zucchini & a few herbs this year. The jalapeño, artichoke & strawberries survived the winter & are producing again.

Next week I have another Keytruda infusion on Tuesday. That means an EKG this Friday & blood Saturday. I'm looking for my CA 125 to go down this time, after two increases the past 6 weeks. I'm feeling a bit stronger with each passing day but I wear out pretty fast.

We went to Sonoma last Friday & stopped by to visit some friends there. Ravi was wide-eyed as their chickens came over to explore. He was very gentle but they kept their distance. We all had a nice visit.



For a creature in other respects so angelically gentle, Ravi had remarkably sharp predatory reflexes (he regarded squirrels as squeaky toys), but the nonchalance of the chickens flummoxed him.

After attending Zoom church Sunday morning, I went by my church to drop off rogue garden greens for our Pastor's chickens. They love arugula. It was salad greens gone to seed this time. Lettuce has some of the prettiest flowers. Fredora, Chick & Chris had gone already. They and others church friends have been so constant in their loving support in prayers and thoughtful notes. I wanted to thank them. It really does encourage me & I am very grateful. I see the face of God.

Today I woke up thinking about the day ahead & didn't even think about cancer. This shows me that I must be getting better since I felt that normal. I'm mindful that being in the here & now is always the target. The now is very good & I am blessed.

Looks like I'm off to Las Vegas on Friday next week. My brother David & his kids & granddaughter plan to drive & my sister is coming from Washington state. I'm looking forward to fun and chaos. My brother Bill's wife is very brave to hostess the Foltz clan. Family is such a complex form of love. We are all older, wiser & kinder now, that should help.

Love to you,
Lina

August 7, 2023 ☽ *Not what I hoped for* ☽ Lina:

My CA125 is up again, to 299 from 173. That's three times in a row that it's up, meaning the cancer is growing. I sent a message to my oncologist at Cedars soliciting advice on whether it's time to change horses & other recommendations. Tomorrow is my next infusion, but I'm feeling discouraged.

Still I feel pretty good. So a trip for a family gathering seems to be the right timing. I will bring some board & card games that we can enjoy. My nephew Jonathan is flying with me. His dad (David), sister & maybe his niece are driving to LV from Oxnard. David completed his prothonotary therapy treatment last Friday. So his prognosis is good for a full recovery.

It's just another Monday but it feels rather pivotal. My Kaiser oncologist is on vacation until August 22. She said after the last CA 125 increase that it might be an indicator for what will happen in a few months, but it seems to me that it indicates what has happened. I'm glad to have my Cedars doctors. Wait & see, rest in God's peace.

I made it to Church yesterday for communion live. I haven't been to live church for at least a couple years, what with COVID & cancer back to back. It was moving & the members work very hard to live according to Christ's teachings, to create a place that is open, safe & real, our slogan.

Rand & I had lunch in the City Thursday with a friend & mentor attorney to celebrate his retirement. He hired me when I moved to Oakland in 1996. He too grew up in the San Fernando Valley. I learned a lot from him. So much has happened since then & friends like him are a blessing. Sharing is what we are made for.

Thank you for your ongoing prayers, supporting advice & love.

Lina

August 15, 2023 ❖ *Feeling lazy* ❖ **Lina:**

Home again & home again. I'm feeling quite lazy, sitting here eating coffee ice cream.

I got back from Las Vegas at about 2 pm yesterday & had a nap first thing. Rand scooped me up at the curb outside Southwest at Oakland. I had to rely on wheelchair service at the terminals. It was just too far to walk with my backpack. It felt strange though to accept that I should take the help I needed. The nice assistants rolled me and my stuff. I was grateful for the help. I never realized how far the walk from & to the plane was. I took it for granted that I could hike through the terminal w/ a backpack. Both flights were freezing. I huddled in my sweatshirt w/ the hood up both ways.

I'm so glad I went. It was a wonderful gathering with the 3 siblings and the kids. Lisa was so kind to all of us & it was so nice making new memories. We laughed for three days, with in between a few testy exchanges & lots of eating. It was rich with reminiscence & new bonds grew too. Above is our picture from around 1959 and the current version, lunch w/ my stepdad, Lisa, my brother David's daughter & granddaughter & me.

I lots interest in gambling after I turned \$20 into 35¢ rather quickly after lunch at the casino. Everyone made good use of Bill's & Lisa's pool. The meteor shower didn't come through even though we stayed up late to watch. I saw two, my sister-in-law, Lisa, saw three. But the prediction of 90



Siblings then and then. David, Bill, Lina, Karin, ca. 1959 in Canoga Park; mimicking same sequence in Las Vegas, 2023.



Lina strikes a pose before the "Oakland Traitors."



Getting the group together for the last time. Previously unseen are John Glass, Lina's stepfather, left foreground, and Jonathan Foltz, David's son, longtime Oakland resident, right rear.



A flock of Foltz females.

per hour turned out a cropper. Nice sky though & many satellites.

I also got to visit with my friends, Keith & Carlene who live in Las Vegas. Keith was my guitar player for many years on the road. My brother had met Keith when we were on the road. Now they are practically neighbors so they plan to get together, having enjoyed our visit so.

Nothing new on the health front. My next infusion is August 29. I will have blood work shortly before. I'm looking to see what clinical trials are available from UCSF & Stanford based upon the recommendations from my Cedars doctors. My Cedars oncologist said he would not say the current regimen is not working based on the CA125 increases, variation is not unusual. So I will continue on that while I explore options.

Thank you again for your encouragement & prayers. I'm feeling good & that is a lot.

Love & Blessings,
Lina

August 24, 2023 ❧ *Enjoying accomplishments* ❧ Lina:

My van is home again, clean & w/ a new window to replace the temporary board (temporary since November 2021), & new tail light. Thanks to brother David & son, Johnathan.

They drove back from Oxnard on Saturday, just ahead of Hilary. The "check engine" light came on in San Jose, but they made it to Oakland in time for David to be included in or dinner plans w/ Robert & Rebecca.

David arrived w/ a hard deadline for work to get out on on Monday. His train back was canceled as he got to Atascadero. Then he booked a different one on Saturday night. Sunday morning, I took him to Jack London & put him on the train at 8:30. He got as far as San Luis Obispo, where his train was canceled because of the earthquake in Ojai. They had to check all the bridges. He caught a ride to Santa Barbara w/ another stranded passengers who rented a car. His daughter picked him up & he was home by 11:00. Mission accomplished. One must have determination when nature conspires so.

A high school friend, Alison, a retired landscape architect, came over yesterday for garden consultation that quickly became an intervention. She is

mighty. She vanquished the weeds that blocked the shed & more. All I could do was to make iced tea. It was such a giant gift. I'm not accustomed to letting people help me. She was so gracious & I learned to receive a bit better.

My friend Amy brought by a little personal fan for Ravi. He loves it.

Today Yohanas, my neighbor who works on cars, installed the parts I got yesterday for a full tune up, plugs, plug wires, cap & rotor. I had resigned myself to doing it myself, but yay Yohanas. No more "check engine" light. The van is ready to hum along as needed.

I have been quite tired the past week. Rand & I were a bit under the weather. I have my usual EKG & labs tomorrow & Saturday, respectively. My next infusion is Tuesday. I should have results Monday. I continue to explore clinical trial options. Rand, Ravi & I are off to our friend's cabin next weekend to help shut it down for the winter over Labor Day. Winter? We plan to take in the super moon on Wednesday night.

Love to you & thank you for teaching me to receive.

Lina

August 28, 2023 ☺ Yay! ☺ Lina:

My CA 125 is down for the first time in 9 weeks, from 299 to 272. There is a pitched battle going on inside me. Go immunotherapy!

Tomorrow is my next Keytruda infusion. My blood & other test results look good. My Cedars Oncologist told me not to take the CA 125 too seriously bc it is just one data point & the scans showed significant improvement. Still I was feeling discouraged & anxious about the next measure. Now I am just grateful for answered prayer. Thank you for keeping me in your prayers. I know you are. Thank you.

We are off to the river for the Labor Day holiday. I'm driving my van & we are all riding together. I feel campfire songs coming on. Rand, Ravi, Gail & her dog Coco. We will enjoy 6 days as we close the cabin up for the winter, eating our way through the ample provisions. I have quite the list.

Winter? It will be here before we know it. We can only wonder what fall has in store. You are in my prayers.

Love,
Lina



Alison's garden intervention.

Her aim is true

Alison and I met at the beginning of fall semester 1968, when we were both high school juniors. Previously she had attended a tony private school, "Lakewood," with my old friend Carl Stone, today the eminent vertical market composer,* who had advised her to look me up.

Alison went on to make her way in the world as a landscape gardener/architect, and although she had more or less retired by 2023, she liked to keep a hand in, so Lina's projected consultation turned into a major offensive against the unruly vegetation that had begun to take over the back forty. The weeds were obliged to sign instruments of surrender aboard the *USS Missouri* afterward.

* <https://www.rlsto.net/Nooz/ocarl/>



Last tango at the cabin; last time the family was together there for Labor Day. A year later Lina was too ill and Ravi too dead.

September 2, 2023 ☽ *At Redacted Creek* ☽ Lina:

Here we are in September. The van hummed along & we made it to the cabin fine on Wednesday. It was a sunny day & I got up about midnight to see the super moon. The viewing was good, clear skies. We forgot a few things, but nothing that required us to go back & get it.

Rand realized that night that he had a scratchy throat & a cold coming on. We went to town on Thursday & got COVID tests in case. Negative, yay. But, as the saying goes, he's built upside down now. His nose runs & his feet smell. He moved upstairs, or more accurately, up the ladder, where he can rest sequestered w/ Proust, coughing & sneezing

The storms moved in yesterday. We had a great lightning & thunder show. Heavy rain followed, almost a inch ultimately. The small stream had white caps this morning. More of the same is forecast tonight & tomorrow. It's cool & cloudy, but we are cozy by the fire. Too bad we forgot the bag w/ the games.

Monday, the sun is predicted to return w/ 75 degrees, tomorrow high of 58. Ravi, Rand & I are in slow mode, but hope to be close to our friend Gail's energy level by tomorrow. Meanwhile we're cooking & eating well.

It is sooooo peaceful here. I guess many did not come up for Labor Day because of the weather reports. I'm looking forward to Zoom Church tomorrow. Our guest pastor, Dr. Sarah Reyes, is brilliant & thought provoking. She says she is a follower of Christ, which she distinguishes from calling oneself a Christian.

Best to you, love & God's peace.

Lina

September 6, 2023 ☽ *Worth the wait* ☽ Lina:

The sun came back to Alder Creek after 3 days of rain & a vivid thunder & lightning show. Since Ravi is mostly deaf there was no doggie anxiety. Coco, Gail's dog, is too positive to worry as long as there are treats available. Rand had recovered from his cold (2 negative COVID tests) sufficiently to take his place in the freezing cold river. I soaked my legs up to my knees, but it was too bone chilling to submerge further or for very long. Rand's soaking ability is a mystery.

I had my infusion the day before we left for the river, so I was happy to sit around during the rain & eat by the fire. The high on Friday was 57, lows in the 40s. Unfortunately, one of our bags, the one with the games, towels & my pillow, was left behind, so no Dragonwood or Architects (a game where you try to build the 7 wonders of the ancient world). Instead Rand created political commentary [see sidebar, overtaken by events –Ed.] from Shelley's "Ozymandias" about the De Santis and we ate cookies. A fair amount of reading went on too. There were not many people up this year, but we had a nice visit with a few who made it up.

The ladybugs were swarming. Little bats were wrapped in their wings and hanging from the tree outside Rand's upstairs window. They were small & black, barely distinguishable from pine cones. What an awesome world God has made.

Ravi is slowing down and was not able to hike any trails this time. He did enjoy the forest though & its vivid smells. He also enjoyed steeling Coco's ball from her.

The van performed its job without any surprises & we made it home safely. I'm grateful for answered prayer & remembering to ask. As Judy Gough would say, "God wants to hear from you." I'm mindful of this every day, and what joy it brings.

It is nice to be home again, settled in to our nest. And, you can't beat Oakland weather. I spent an hour or so today pulling weeds & cutting back the creeping rose bush in hopes of letting in enough sun for our artichoke to survive to produce next year. A little work every day & I will have a garden again.

Now school is back in session as we pray that the schools will find ways to meet the very great needs of their children amid what seems to be growing scarcity of staff and resources. No easy job for parents or teachers.

Sending my love & prayers.

Lina

September 18, 2023 ☞ *Abundant joy* ☞ **Lina:**

It's been a bit long but I've just been in a holding pattern since my last treatment 3 weeks ago. I get my next infusion tomorrow. And, I just got my



Floridamandias

The Muse of Light Verse perches on my shoulder at odd intervals, and what she drops there tends to be of irregular consistency. This one I judge to have been middle-grade:

I met a pollster with the latest news
Who said – "Fleece vests and shiny boots of rock
Litter the Everglades. Near them, in the ooze,
Half sunk, a ruined campaign lies, in hock,
Disorganized. The race was his to lose.
'Kick immigrants and fags,' his handlers said,
'LGBT – rile up the common folk.'
But out the gate the effort's looking dead.
On OAN and Fox the chyron reads:
He's Ron DeSantimandias, Scourge of Woke;
The budding fascist that this country needs!
It hasn't worked. In Mar-a-Lago far
The Former Guy maintains a solid lead,
The MAGA hordes are sticking with the Tsar:"

(When you're a Tsar they let you do it.)

CA125 measure. It is 232, down 40 points from last time, August 26, moving in the right direction for the last 2. Answered prayer. Next stop, scans in LA October 2.

This past Sunday the quilters from my Church gave me a beautiful quilt after it was prayed over & blessed at the service. I am so moved by the showing of love & support on my journey. What we experience through God's love is beyond words. I love my cozy quilt, which is just what I needed to feel warm inside & out. I'm wrapped up for nap time. I'm thinking of Patt too, wrapped in the comfort & love of the second quilt that these amazing folks made.

My dear, longtime friend Jenny returned home today to San Diego & her family after a lovely 4 day visit. That was very special too. So during this past few weeks, I guess life has been busy despite fatigue. Life is good.

I'm thinking of you & the abundant joy you bring to me. The pain going on in the world is such a contrast. It's difficult to imagine the suffering in Ukraine, Morocco & Libya. I choose to be grateful instead of undeserving. I hope I will be able to do more of God's work going forward. There is so much need.

I am blessed & this privilege is free for all. Love to you in all your pursuits & challenges.

Lina

September 21, 2023 ❧ *"To see what is important"* ❧ Lina:

Here we are the last day of another summer. It is reported that this is a record coolest year for California. My stunted zucchini reflects the lack of heat this summer. But, I got some nice strawberries & the cherry tomatoes may ripen yet.

it's time to start thinking tarps again for the backyard projects. The rain is scheduled to start next week. We have accomplished some purging and de-clutter, but the detritus is vast.

I'm feeling pretty good since the infusion on Tuesday. So, we plan a Costco run today along with a trip to Point Isabel dog park (next door) for Ravi. The smell of gophers brings Ravi great joy.

I've had ample lounging under my cozy quilt. I'm glowing with the love I receive. It is as I imagine that God is showing his plan that we all should



The CAPC quilt.

live such caring. The world is different when we are connected by love. I guess that is obvious, but to experience the love so vividly is too rare.

My friend Jenny told me the story of having a rough travel day. A stranger who bought her a chocolate chip cookie when her young son was having a meltdown at the airport. He said she deserved it & was doing a great job. He told her, "chocolate always makes me feel better." Her anxiety melted away. She told her son that he could have the cookie if he behaved on the plane & he fulfilled his promise. Peace, love & joy from one thoughtful cookie. The world is full of love, but it's easy to miss. Next time I'm annoyed by a child at the airport, maybe I will have the presence of mind to share a cookie instead of judging & being annoyed. Simple love, when I have eyes to see what is important.

Blessings, Peace & gratitude to you,
Lina

October 2, 2023 ❧ *Talking, listening* ❧ Lina:

Sorry for the long gap. I've been talking to & listening for God. Marda gave me a book about healing, forgiveness & the power of the Holy Spirit. It has inspired a lot of prayer, which has brought me to a very positive sense of well-being. I sleep under my quilt feeling the power of love's healing. Listening takes focus & I have been blessed with it recently. Although driving still gets me in my critical mode, I've more quickly gone to prayer & gratitude for love.

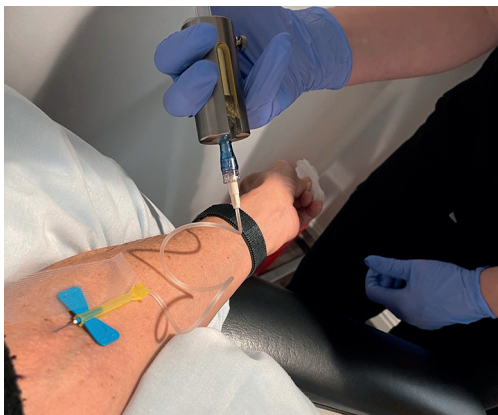
Meanwhile, I'm certainly enjoying Bill's fattening bread. I did gain a pound. Before leaving for Europe, Marda delivered her oatmeal cookies from her mother's recipe too. Rand made bachelor casserole, a chicken curry version of tuna casserole. All good calorie building. I am blessed by so much love.

Today, I had my PET-CT scan. I see my Cedar's doctors Wednesday in the morning to find out the results. Then I head home immediately after.

I drove down on Sunday. Rand is home w/ Ravi. I brought food for my pre-scan, 24 hour protein-only diet, salmon w/ spinach & arugula salad, & only water 6 hours before. I scarfed up some fig cookies as soon as the scan was over, then went to the Felafel Palace for a lamb swarma pita. I ate most of it. Lentil soup w/ bread & butter made a great dinner back at the Hyatt in



Ravi's last visit to Point Isabel.



Ouch!

Valencia, a lovely place that takes my points & dogs (for future reference).

I stopped by the condo, which has fresh paint & is being readied for rental soon. I collected by last debris, toaster, iron & miscellaneous.

The seasons are changing. So much different is different from when my trips here were frequent.

I'm scheduled to have my rounds of blood tests next weekend & my infusion next Tuesday, assuming the Kaiser strike does not interfere. So, then I will have a better idea what's next, maybe. Meanwhile, I'm in prayer, having daily communion & seeking God's healing peaceful place.

Peace & love to you.

Lina

October 6, 2023 🌀 *Change is in the air* 🌀 Lina:

I'm home again after several plan changes. I'm glad I could surrender the chaos to God. It's beyond me.

The PET scan results were mixed. The former lesions were significantly reduced & several were completely gone. However, there are new ones on my liver that are indicative of disease progression.

My doctors at Cedars recommended a clinical trial & to continue the current regimen until we determine whether I meet the trial criteria & what options to pursue. Determining whether I meet trial criteria requires an in-person consultation & my "informed consent" to participate and then a biopsy of the new lesions & CT scan. Cedars is part of the trial participation. Kaiser is not. So I would be back in LA for that option.

Kaiser recommends a different drug regimen. I don't have enough information yet, but if the trial offers a potentially better outcome goal, I'm inclined to do that. For the Kaiser option "outcome success" is 47% for a duration of 1 year. Outcome success is defined as tumor shrinkage, not a cure, basically controlling the progression for up to a year.

Wednesday, when I had planned to return, a biopsy was scheduled at Cedars for Thursday, so I stayed in LA. But it turned out that the trials criteria requires the consultation first. So, no biopsy Thursday & I headed home. I think the consult, biopsy & CT will be scheduled in LA next week per my



View from the Hyatt Valencia.

discussions w/ the trials coordinator.

Meanwhile, during my drive home, I had a tele-visit w/ my Kaiser oncologist. My Kaiser oncologist was going to terminate my infusion scheduled for Tuesday next week despite my concerns. But, she consulted w/ my Cedars oncologist & agreed to allow the infusion on Tuesday to give me time to sort out my decision going forward & because of the partial positive result shown in the PET results. Answered prayer.

The last day of the Kaiser strike is today, Friday. I don't think I can get my EKG or lab work until Saturday. EKGs are only M-F, so possibly Monday for that & labs Saturday & Sunday. God is my personal assistant. I'll do what can be arranged.

It's an amazing walk. I'm listening & working on staying in that place of love & gratitude. It is more often the case now & it feels so much better than the anxiety or frustration. Answered prayer.

Now, I'm off for my morning shower, preceded by a nice hot soak in the tub w/ Dead Sea bath salts. They say 91 degrees today. That's autumn in CA. I intend to address a few tasks, laundry & replacing the garden hose nozzle. But Rand & I could not get the old one, which only sprays out the sides now, off the hose even w/ channel locks & liquid wrench. Challenges abound. I see a pipe wrench & a 10 foot pipe extension in my future.

Love to you. Stay cool & kind,

Lina

October 10, 2023 ☞ Ravi: sad news ☞ Lina:

Ravi crossed the Rainbow Bridge yesterday. It was time & he seemed ready. We took him to his holistic vet. In their outdoor garden he & I were lying on a blanket. Rand gave him a few of his favorite treats & Ravi relaxed, stretched out on his side, enjoying an ear rub. It was very peaceful. As a poet once wrote, approximately, when he fell like a mighty oak, he left a vacant spot against the sky. Our horizons are forever changed, but we are grateful for all the love we shared during almost 15 years.

I had my infusion today. My CA125 is down slightly from 272 to 252, marginal gain, but at least it is not up. I still feel renewed by prayer & safety in God's hands. What a blessing.



The end. Too early? We thought not. His life had become hard. If, as we both surmised, the household would never again count a canine as part of the staff, our grief was informed by the certain knowledge that we had saved the best for last.

A good dog gone for good

“Old dogs can teach us new tricks. An old dog shuffles on, relentlessly happy, still interested in the world. Even when they’re too worn out to run it’s still there – no bitterness, no regret, no looking back, just on to the next thing with amiable confusion. Dogs are nothing but good.”

—Mark Lawrence



“New options for spontaneity?” That’s one way of putting it. First I heard about it was over morning coffee two hours before liftoff.

I’m waiting to hear about scheduling w/ the clinical trial in LA. Nothing much more to say for now.

Love to you.

Lina

October15,2023 ☺ *Unplanned* ☺ Lina:

We made an unplanned overnight trip to Oregon. In light of our new options for spontaneity, we decided to go see the full annular eclipse, as the earth cast its shadow over the sun. [Er...sort of. —Ed.] What an amazing world & beyond. The clouds parted in the morning & we got great viewing from the Best Western parking lot in Klamath Falls. It was like driving to LA, about 5 1/2 hours. We got back last night at about 5:00.

I have a video conference tomorrow, Monday, at 5:00 pm w/ one of the doctors from the trials study. It is the first step to see whether I meet criteria. I don’t know whether I’m hoping for participation or not. I cannot know whether a good outcome would follow or not. I’m praying for discernment, but it seems like the only option with promise, other than divine intervention. So, I’m in if I meet criteria.

The option that Kaiser recommended seeks an outcome of tumor shrinkage for up to a year, w/ a 47% chance. I don’t like the target or the probability. I don’t know of any other options now. So, “go boldly forward.”

I’m continuing my current drug regimen until I start a new treatment because it is keeping the tumors mostly at bay. However, it apparently is not stopping the spread of the disease. My Kaiser Oncologist wanted to stop already, so I may need to work around that

Assuming I qualify for the trial, I think I will be heading to LA next week for an exam, biopsy & CT scan. My treatment would be every 2 weeks by infusion at the clinic in LA. I’m hoping it will start before my next Keytruda infusion would otherwise be due on October 31.

That’s the up-to-the-minute news. Have a joyful, loving day.

Lina

October21,2023 ☺ *Nothing much* ☺ Lina:

Well, the end of another week, but no scheduling so far. I know that God’s timing has been best all along. So, no worries.

We're hoping to fit in our fall trip to Puerto Vallarta, in November. I got fully refundable tickets on points. We're just waiting to see how scheduling works out & whether I will start the clinical trial. No point in stressing & with prayer I can let it go.

We picked up our quarterly wine shipment yesterday. I have had impaired walking because of the Lenvima sores on the bottom of my foot for several weeks. But they seem to be improving significantly today. I am doing my exercises & working on getting stronger after a period of fatigue.

Oh goody, I can do more laundry & prepare for stuff outside to get wet. I'm collecting towels & stuff from the yard that will not be fun to deal with after rain predicted for tomorrow.

There is only one scheduling coordinator for the trial. I will need the biopsy results before they can schedule the first treatment. There is a 2 week "clear out" period when I need to stop the Lenvima before I would start the trials regimen which will require infusions every 2 weeks in L.A.

My next Keytruda infusion (the current regimen) is scheduled for October 31. Our trip to PV is scheduled for November 5-17. I will laugh if the "clear out" period & other dates align. Stranger things have happened. We remain flexible.

That's all the current news. Peace & love to you.

Lina

November 1, 2023 ☺ *What a flurry of activity* ☺ Lina:

We're in L.A. again, since Sunday. I'm here to complete various tests to determine whether I meet criteria for a particular clinical trial by the American Cancer Society & Sloan-Kettering, being conducted at Cedars. It targets a particular protein used by the cancer based on, in part, a genetic test of the cancer.

Tomorrow, I have a biopsy of a new tumor on my liver. It has to be 1 centimeter minimum to do the sampling. I had a CT scan & labs on Monday to confirm the tumor is of sufficient size & that I'm healthy enough. So, tomorrow is the last part determining whether I meet criteria.

So far, it's looking like I do. Assuming so, I will be enrolled & start on a trial regimen w/ different drugs around Monday, November 20. There is a



Cedars on Ventura Boulevard, looking festive.

Blood will tell

Lina's sister once said to her, regarding her firstborn "How did *I* end up with *your* daughter?" Between her boldness, her variegated, not infrequently exotic careers (Tarot cards! Poker shark! Tour leader to foreign parts!), and her taste for vintage cars and self-maintenance of same, Kristy is very much her aunt's niece.



Lina's eldest niece at the wheel of her 1963 Plymouth Valiant.

two week "wash out" period, where I stop taking the prior drugs, before I can start the trials regimen. Yesterday, I had what is likely my last Keytruda infusion for my current regimen & I'm anticipating stopping the pills Monday. So, were going to Mexico on Sunday to enjoy the wash out.

I made a calculated guess about how the timing would shake out & made fully refundable/changeable reservations some weeks ago. Low & behold, the timing fell into place. (God's timing again is perfect).

Our friends, with whom we have often have visited in PV, are again hosting us. We will no doubt enjoy the r&r w/ R&R. That's rest & relaxation w/ Robert & Rebecca, but also a fair amount if ranting & raving is guaranteed, as Robert & Rand discuss politics. (I think I've used my allotment of "Rs" up:").

We're meeting my eldest niece, who lives below the Hollywood sign, for dinner tonight. She is my sister's daughter, one of two, who could not make it to the Las Vegas reunion. Then tomorrow we check out early for my 8:00 am appointment. It is 18 miles away, but this is LA. It takes 1 hour & 20 minutes to get there & 15 minutes to wind are way from the parking to the right building at Cedars.

We should be on the road by noon tomorrow, headed home. Two days to repack our suitcases & ahhh , r&r. Oh oh México. BTW I have 159 consecutive days o Duolingo Spanish exercises under my belt since our last visit May 1.

I remain amazed by the simultaneous suffering, love, joy & endurance we see all around. This week, our drives up Alvarado Street, downtown, to West Hollywood via Wilshire Blvd. have offered such a dramatic study in humanity. What a quilt that is!

God's peace & love to you. We need a lot of love out there.

Lina

November 6, 2023 ☺ *We made it to México!* ☺ Lina:

We had some arduous challenges in LA. I had the biopsy last Thursday & left for home at about 3:00 pm. It took us 2 hours to get to the freeway. We made it to about Valencia & encountered the worst traffic jam in our LA travels. Two big rigs had crashed near Gorman. It took 4 hours to get past

the crash. We got home at 1:00 am. Rand had to drive the entire way. We made it home though. Answered prayer.

The next two days were hard. More pain than I expected made it hard to breathe. But, by Sunday most of the pain was gone & I could breathe again. So, off to México we went. Our friends had dinner waiting for us & I was in bed by 8:00 local time, which my bio-clock thought was 5:00 pm since we had not yet digested the return of standard time. Today I feel good & rested.

I made blueberry muffins today & returned to my regular job, eating. The weather is balmy & our hosts are ever so kind & accommodating, although Rebecca has a terrible headache & cold-like symptoms today & is staying in her room & wearing a mask when she emerges. We have all had recent COVID vaccines. Rebecca is doing a COVID test today. Who knows.

I brought my usual bag of foodstuffs, so I have provisions that I can rely on until we make it to the grocery store in town, la Comer. I'm continuing my Duolingo Spanish lessons, 164 consecutive days now.

The ride from the airport was colorful w/ all the Día de los Muertos decorations out. They had the tallest Catrina yet & mucho mas.

I expect to hear the biopsy results w/in the week. Meanwhile, I stopped taking the Lenvima pills, as instructed, for the two-week washout period in anticipation of qualifying for the clinical trials. I'm hoping its side effects will quickly resolve.

I'm amazed again by God's perfect timing. Will I ever learn to relax & just go with it? Some lessons take forever, as Erica Jong once wrote. Seems I still have time to learn them.

Thank you for your prayers & loving thoughts. God's peace & love to you.

[Later]: Life has prepared me to adjust to plan changes. Good thing I'm well practiced.

The biopsy came back negative for a cancer tumor, only necrotic tissue where it was. So, it's another biopsy when we return. If they find a tumor sample to qualify for the trial, I do the two week washout & go boldly forward. Meanwhile, I need to go back on the Lenvima. Fortunately, I packed for that contingency. So much for my celebration of being off it.



They take Día de los Muertos seriously down here.



Stylish dining at "La Cappella" with Rob's law school classmate.



View of papist hangout Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

We are going out to dinner tonight. That's all the up-to-the-minute news. México awaits.

Love to you,
Lina

November 7, 2023 ☾ Fireworks & celebrity traces ☾ Lina:

We had a lovely dinner in town last night & walked over to see Elizabeth Taylor's & Richard Burton's house nearby, which is now a hotel. Stunning. We had fireworks & a string quartet accompaniment with dinner.

Robert's friend from law school & her sister joined Robert, Rand & me. Poor Rebecca stayed home in bed. She's on the mend now but still wearing a mask at home.

Rand & I are heading into town to buy a chicken to make for dinner tonight. The people are so nice.

BTW CA125 was down from 351 to 229 on October 29.

Love to you,
Lina

November 11, 2023 ☾ Full circle ☾ Lina:

So, no biopsy, clinical trial or travel to LA in the near future. During the taxi ride to town for dinner last night, I got the call. The oncologist for the trial said she consulted w/ the radiologist about doing another biopsy.

The radiologist said the other liver lesion looks the same as the one he biopsied & likely is residual necrotic tissue left behind from a tumor, useless to biopsy. He said the other potential tumor candidates were more risky to biopsy & further biopsy risks outweigh potential benefits. I'm scheduled to talk w/ that oncologist again on Monday. However, basically, no biopsy specimen from an active tumor, no trial qualification. This all raises the question: Has the current regimen failed or is it (and/or prayer) working to destroy the cancer? Stay tuned for the rest of the story, I guess. But, I don't need to stand by the phone for scheduling calls for the rest of our time here

We had a lovely dinner at Archie's Wok & brief stroll downtown (old PV) after the call. My left foot had been painful to walk on when we arrived

(Lenvima side effects), but that is much better now. So, I see more excursions into town in our immediate future. We have 5 more full days of peaceful bliss, then travel day. We plan to arrive at the airport at about 2:30 pm for our 4:55 flight to SF.

Rand & I had a lovely beach walk & swim in the gentle surf behind the rock break wall yesterday & a nice float & swim the day before that. Rand & Robert swim at least 3x a day. Napping is a favorite around here. I'm all in.

I am grateful for the blessing of a peaceful mind. I feel positive as the adventure unfolds & continue to cultivate forgiveness & resurrection through faith & love.

Love & peace to you also.

Lina

November 14, 2023 ☺ Café Olla ☺ Lina:

Rand & I got into town yesterday for some lunch at one of our favorites, Café Olla. We grabbed some groceries after & headed back. My 173 consecutive days practicing Spanish on the Duolingo app have improved my vocabulary. My grammar and accent are pretty appalling though.

Rebecca made lunch today & we plan to go into town for an early dinner.

Love & warm regards. Vaya con Diós.

Lina

November 21, 2023 ☺ Gastric ☺ Lina:

Quite a few changes since my last post. I started experiencing nausea & increased gastric issues our last 2 days in PV. They continued through our flight home. I'm feeling better today. Pills quenched the nausea, but one Immodium, herbal aid & Pepto Bismol proved inadequate. No fault of the Mexican food, but I put in a test sample today, just to be sure there is no infection or parasite. I'm down to 90 pounds. Not good.

I conferred w/ my doctors yesterday & today. My doctors stopped my current drug regimen yesterday, which is likely the cause of recent issues. I had labs over the weekend at Kaiser, expecting then to do my scheduled infusion today. That did not happen. My bloodwork looked pretty good, surprisingly. My CA125 is up slightly, from 229 to 256, still on the low end.



The sea really is that blue.



Enjoying an adult beverage at Cafe Olla.



Noshing with our gracious hosts.

I pumped up the fluid intake including a high quality electrolyte supplement that I found in Mexico & the no sugar version here at 7-11. Yay. Neither Whole Foods nor CVS had it, strange.

I did not qualify, as I mentioned previously, for the trial. I believe the next step is a type of chemotherapy, Enhertu, that targets my cancer gene. Don't know yet though.

Rand's brother is coming for Thanksgiving & we plan to have our traditional slow cooker turkey thighs with fixins. It is easy & the men will help.

I've been able to scarf up food today. I eliminated gluten from my diet starting last Thursday, but that had no apparent effect. The symptoms were even somewhat worse. So, tonight we are having chicken pot pies. We will see if that has any adverse effects. I took 2 Immodium & that seemed to work since this morning.

I'm in a good place with my daily prayers & focusing on God's amazing power. I trust that your holiday will be loving & warm. Go Niners.

Love,

Lina

November 25, 2023 ☺ *Film & games* ☺ Lina:

Christmas in a month. Wow. Hope I have the jam to get cards out.

Thanksgiving was great here. I ate to excess & have had an improved appetite since. I ate everything on my plate & salad too. I think my stomach was in shock, but it handled it fine. No adverse consequences. 95 pounds today!

We, Rand, Greg & I, went to see *Napoleon* on Friday afternoon, keeping up our family movie tradition. The movie was made for the big screen, but way too violent, gratuitously. To wash the taste out of my mind, we came home & played Architects, a board game where you build one of the 7 ancient wonders of the world. I won by building Ephesus, so of course that was fun. Greg headed home at about 5pm.

Tonight its turkey thigh & pecan pie leftovers. Yay. I'm very happy for the tasty calories.

I'm hoping to schedule a PET scan at Kaiser Walnut Creek next week, which is mandatory to establish a baseline before starting the ENHERTU

treatment with Kaiser. My doctors at Cedars agree that ENHERTU is the best treatment option now. Rand's brother also did some research on the treatment & said 10% were cured. My Kaiser doctor only cited the success percentage for "success," being to reduce tumor size & disease progression at something like 47%. The possibility of a cure, although low, is encouraging & a better possibility than I knew about. Thank you Greg.

Meanwhile, I continue in prayer & daily communion knowing God can cure me using drugs or not. I try to do my part to remain in that loving space. Thank you for your prayers.

I send you my loving prayers for joy & peace during the upcoming holidays. I hope you can dwell in the love & peace that God offers.

Love,
Lina

December 2, 2023 🍷 *Spartan lodgings* 🍷 Lina:

So happy to be home again before dark. We just got back at 4:30. It gets dark so fast this time of year. Uneventful transit to & from, Thursday & today, Saturday, respectively.

Friday I had blood work & a PET-CT at Cedars, nearly two weeks before I could get an appointment for the PET at Kaiser. Since my new drug regimen at Kaiser cannot begin until I had the PET & other tests that I'm having at Kaiser on Monday, we made the drive. I will know my CA125 by Monday probably & I have telephonic appointment w/ my Cedars oncologist on Wednesday. The CA125 will tell me whether the cancer activity has increased & to what degree since I stopped my Lenvima & Keytruda. Not knowing that is anxiety provoking.

We stayed at a different hotel on Thursday night that is only a few blocks from Cedars. No, ice, no closet, no extra blanket, w/ a view of the car wash, in a word Spartan. It was quiet though & adequate. We moved to the Valencia Hyatt for Friday night after we finished up at Cedars at about 4:45. We were very glad that we decided to drive home today, rather than pushing to get home on Friday night.

I still don't know when I will begin the new regimen or whether some unknown will torpedo that plan.



Feasting on Lina's slow-cooked turkey thighs at what was to prove, alas, our last-ever Thanksgiving at The Crumbling Manse.™



Lina says "Spartan"; I say "stark." Almost exactly a year earlier, I have since learned, a hip-hop entertainer took his own life on the premises. I've stayed in bleaker hostels, but only a couple.



"Most would not say the 5 is scenic, but it really is beautiful with eyes to see." That's as may be, but following over two dozen roundtrips along this route its scenic charms diminished for me.

I'm enjoying some nice hot pea soup, waiting for the house to warm up so I can take my sweatshirt off. Again we marveled at the beautiful sky & landscape on our drive. Most would not say the 5 is scenic, but it really is beautiful w/ eyes to see.

I'm under the covers now, keeping my feet warm. I am getting increasingly strong again though. I was restricted to a protein diet for 24 hours before the PET & only water for 6 hours before. So, I was famished by the time I was done. I proceeded to eat, eat eat, to recapture those calories.

I should have more substantive information by Wednesday on how things look according to the tests & a start date, maybe, by mid week.

I'm sending my prayers to you. Thank you for your enduring prayers & encouragement.

Love to you,

Lina

December 5, 2023 ☺ Numbers up ☺ Lina:

The cancer has progressed, but it hasn't been as much as I feared given no intervention since November 20. My CA 125 was up from 229 to 256 on November 19. Now it is 441. That seems like a lot, but back in May, when I started Lenvima, my readings were 461 & 640.9 May 9 & 16, respectively. In July 2022, before chemo & surgery it was 2620. By December 2022, post surgery, it was 18.8. w/in the normal range 0-30.

The PET scan report from December 1 shows increased cancer activity, increased (double) size for tumors in lymph nodes in various areas. But it doesn't seem that bad considering. I begin the new treatment in one week. I consult w/ my Cedars oncologist tomorrow.

I'm in prayer that God will use the new regimen, infusion every three weeks, to heal me. The data says 10% chance of cure, 47% chance of shrinking the tumors & slowing progression. Today, I'm still feeling way better than 3 weeks ago when the Lenvima side effects were most severe.

Meanwhile, the holidays are upon us & I'm continuing my exercises & both physical & Spanish. Duo Lingo is not the greatest tool for learning Spanish, but it's accessible & I have 190 consecutive days of doing daily practice exercises.

Rand & I plan to go out for shopping today, Costco included. We also plan to pick up Ravi's ashes & memorial box. Sigh. I'm so happy about all the help that my Church is doing over the holidays. Small but mighty.

Thank you for your prayers & well wishes. Love each other. It's a free gift w/ every life.

Lina

December 13, 2023 ❧ *A weary world rejoices* ❧ **Lina:**

The days are full of interesting observations. I'm mindful of Monte's sermon questioning how a weary world rejoices. There is senseless suffering all around & turmoil. We celebrate the gifts of hope & joy where we find them & refuse to let the good be in a shadow of guilt. Be forgive & forgive. It's a long road.

So I am facing the good & praying in gratitude, surrendering the rest to God.

My bit of good includes starting my new ENHERTU regimen yesterday, which consists of infusions every third week. My CA125 measure actually dropped a small amount, 428, on December 10 from 441 on December 1. That is a shorter measurement period than usual, but I got tests in L.A. this time too bc I had scans. In any case the cancer has not taken to afterburners. Now it will be wacked by the infusion, which is supposed to bring with it nausea & fatigue particularly for the first three days after. I seem to be doing well. No nausea yet but I've been taking meds for that. I feel pretty good actually.

Rand & I went out to dinner shortly after the infusion w/ our friends Robert & Rebecca who got back from Mexico last week. I had a big meal & a nice sleep after that. I forgot to take a picture of the "urban buffet." It was yummy & we all enjoyed it thoroughly.

I'm enjoying looking at the beauty. Meteor shower tonight. I'm hoping to see some Northern Lights one of these solar flare nights.

Love to all,
Lina



More infusions.

December 19, 2023 ☞ *Driveway dreams* ☞ Lina:

Busy time of year. I don't quite have the energy to keep up, but it's beautiful to see. We just got a tree. Hopefully, we will get it together to put it up. It smells really good.

Nothing much to report on the treatment front. I'm slowly gathering energy. It is one week today since the first new infusion, but this one has more of a fatigue factor. I need to sit down & rest a lot. I have two weeks before the next infusion. I feel pretty good over all though. I'm just trying to use the energy I have efficiently. More to go food. Although I made pizza this week & a couple good salads. We have chicken pot pies on deck for tonight.

Last week & the weekend was devoted to driveway dreams, except it was also another great football weekend.

I found the "Trustworthy Builder" to reshape the parking area for a third time & it looks like it might be functional this time. He finished Saturday night. It's been an ongoing project since 2014.

I also may have found someone who may be able to do the curb cut now. A neighbor four doors down is also putting in a parking area & curb cut & the guy says he can do my curb cut & driveway from the street to the newly reshaped approach. I'm waiting for a bid. It could happen.

Saturday night I had to shoehorn into a parking place after we dared to go out to Robert & Rebecca's Christmas party and hope to find parking when we got home. I am a master at parallel parking. Still, parking is only getting more dire with all the new high rises. We were fortunate that we found that one.

My next project is to try to find our Christmas tree stand & box of decorations. I have accumulated a very nice collection of memories. Now, if I can find them is the question. I think Catholics have a saint for lost things. I'm relying on memory. Mine is pretty good, but I also will rely on not having changed the box. Hope I didn't repack. Next stop tomorrow, basement.

Love & best wishes to you,
Lina



The Driveway of Sisyphus.



Vaseline dreams: "I am a master at parallel parking." Ya think?

December 27, 2023 ❧ *Driveway dreams, part deux* ❧ Lina:

What a fabulous Christmas. We found the Christmas box in the storage locker on our second try. We got more done this weekend than I ever would have done if I was not trying to find that box.

We organized & purged the entry hall inboxes that have been accumulating incoming mail & dust since at least January 2020 (the coupons in there expired before 2019; organized the storage locker; reconfigured the living room; moved some debris from my office & put up our best Christmas tree ever. The energy I had to participate in this is a testament to my robust response to the new intervention.

I'm only 2 weeks in, but after the first 5 days of fatigue, I started feeling significantly better. I weighed in at 97.5 pounds today up from 90 pounds that I struggled to maintain for the past month. My second installment is January 4. My oncologist in LA says that my robust response bodes well for my future response to the treatment. So, answered prayer. I am feeling very encouraged, but trying to maintain an even approach, not getting too excited.

But talk about excitement, I may have a driveway soon. A series of coincidence & luck have God fingerprints, aka answered prayers. I've been trying to put in a driveway since 2014. Rand just rolls his eyes when I say it might happen soon. Diego, the "Trustworthy Builder" has done his part. Ramon, the foreman overseeing the neighbor's driveway work is supposed to come this weekend to do the concrete, & we submitted our preliminary permit application to the city. It could happen.

Meanwhile, our car is in the shop, where the mechanics are trying to diagnose our "phantom power drain." Getting stranded by a dead battery is unacceptable. We do not want to have that, particularly away from home. The loaner car required a tutorial to open the door to get out. I'm dialed in now. Still, we are happy to just stay home on these rainy days.

We had a lovely Christmas dinner of BBQ steaks, potatoes, salad & bread. It turned into quite the fun feast when Marda stopped by to drop off her amazing cookies and joined Rand, his brother Greg, and me for dinner. Maybe the best Christmas ever with Zoom Church to begin the day.

Love & prayers for peace go out to you.

Lina

Yeah, about that driveway

This third and last attempt (previous page) – although to the end of her life Lina still dreamed of bringing the project to a successful conclusion – came a-cropper once again. This did not deter her from charging ahead with a "curb cut" the following year. Not every *t* was crossed nor *i* dotted in the course of this undertaking – she went ahead without an actual permit – which subsequently occasioned a few unkind remarks from the city. Their opening gambit suggested that \$15,000 would satisfy civic honor; the matter was settled at last in mid-2025 for about a quarter of that sum.



The Brothers Kareagazov humping Xmas paraphernalia.

2024 (I): *eclipse*

ANOTHER CHEERFUL JANUARY. Lina's latest regimen had her feeling far better than she had during the waning months of her course of Lenvima, and the "cancer number" trend was encouraging: indeed, back for a time in the normal range, with the lowest CA-125 level detected at any point since the doctors started looking. She began to put on a little weight – she'd looked gauntish in Mexico that November – and had retrieved some of her former energy: check out, by all means, her remarkable "tile cutting" project in March (*pp. 148-149*), undertaken in connection with some costly elective surgery on the household plumbing.

In, so to say, sunnier times we drove to Corvallis in 2017 to see that year's total solar eclipse. When I say "we drove" I mean "Lina," because she rented a camper the size of a studio apartment for the trip, and I, frankly, am no good trying to move anything larger than the average sedan. The event was glorious: accept no substitutes, no partials, no annulars. At totality the sky looks as though a hole has been punched through the fabric of Creation.

Greg had hoped to accompany us on the excursion (hence the mobile apartment) but a last-minute scheduling conflict having to do with his side hustle prevented him. Retired in 2024 from both the day job and the consulting gig, he was free to join us as we laid plans to catch that year's North American reprise. Both of us were sharply dismayed when Lina announced her attention to hire another land barge to transport the party overland. The brothers raised many practical objections, perhaps the most telling having to do with the unreliability of vernal weather along much of the path (indeed, some our contacts reported afterward that they had found themselves pinned beneath

densely overcast skies in the event). I had the happy inspiration to suggest that our best prospect of clear skies might involve positioning ourselves off the Mexican coast. Reader, we did. We booked an “eclipse cruise” for April, departing from Los Angeles and terminating fourteen days later in Florida. Our doughty captain positioned the vessel under cloudless skies about 150 miles southeast of Mazatlán, in the centerline of the eclipse, for a full four minutes of darkness-at-noon. “Worth every penny,” Greg pronounced afterward. “I’m glad we agree,” I told him, “because between the three of us we just dropped one-and-a-half million of those on this trip.”

Lina’s family apparently never went in much for vacations, and whenever hitherto I’d suggested something ambitious and costly in that line, she would frown. “I just can’t see spending that much on something intangible.” “Look around us!” I would howl. “We are *drowning* in tangibles!” She’d relaxed that attitude in latter years, and her disease, I think, made her more disposed regard the accumulation of life experiences as opposed to mere *stuff* in a different light.

The cruise was to mark perhaps the last relatively carefree period of her ordeal, as hard upon our return we learned that her cancer antigens had resumed their upward course, and that the Kaiser oncologist had determined – without consulting us! – to terminate the current regimen. This led us by-and-by back to Cedars, where Lina was enrolled that spring in a clinical trial that proved ultimately ineffectual, and which, indeed, may in the end have done more harm than good...

January 1, 2024 ❧ “It’s a wrap” ❧ Lina:

It’s a wrap. Goodbye 2023. Looking in the rear view mirror, it was quite a year. We added some major accomplishments just before the end, finding our Christmas box of ornaments, putting up a delicious smelling tree &, &, &, believe it or not, we have a driveway. We haven’t been able to test out its functionality yet (It had to dry) but there it is right in front, just like a real driveway! Today we expect to remove the hazard cones & try to drive a car in. Rand still will not agree that we have a driveway until we prove that a car can get in to park [Spoiler: it can’t. –Ed].

We had a lovely New Year’s eve at home with baked potatoes smothered in slow-cooker turkey thighs, with side of broccoli & cauliflower. New Year’s Eve 28 years ago was when we looked into each other’s eyes & said, “wow what have we been thinking?” Our friendship since my birthday in 1969 transitioned to romance. We’ve been together since that night in 1995. So, a nice romantic evening at home was just the thing.

Tomorrow, I go in for blood tests & an EKG, which are typical before each infusion. I will get a CA 125 reading & other important measures, but based on how well I feel, I’m having a robust response without much in the way of side effects. Answered prayer. Thursday, I am scheduled to have my second infusion of the new regimen, assuming tests yield acceptable readings.

So, new-year resolutions to get rid of our excessive collection of treasures is primary. Of course growing my relationship with God comes first. The joy I have felt for the past months continues. I am grateful & mindful that I cannot make this joy, but can receive it with gratitude for God’s grace.

Also, the rearrangement of furniture in our living room with our Christmas decorating transformed it. We had it all wrong for at least the past 20 years, but did not know it until we experienced the change. A metaphor for so much of life I think.

We also are planning to go view the total solar eclipse on April 8 this year. We considered a road trip, accompanied by Greg, Rand’s brother and stopping to visit friends & family on the way to optimal viewing in Kentucky. But, Rand & Greg started to reel at my preference for a long & busy trip. Instead, we found an eclipse-viewing cruise that goes that goes from

Twenty-nine New Year’s Eves

We did indeed first meet on Lina’s sixteenth birthday in 1969, but apart from a single episode of light snogging later that summer our relations over the decades were informed by cordial comradeship rather than romance. An unlikely chain of circumstances fetched me up on short notice in Southern California at the end of 1995 and I applied to Lina, who had stayed with me en route to a wedding a few months earlier, for reciprocal couch-surfing privileges. So it was that we found ourselves together that NYE, both of us dateless...one thing led to another. When two people have known and observed one another over the course of a quarter-century, it seems as though each can approach such a transition with some confidence that, as Lina once observed, “you’re not getting tied up with a loony.” We never ceased congratulating ourselves.



“We had it all wrong for at least the past 20 years.” Actually, the room had been already reconfigured more than once. This time we merely transposed the order of the chair, the lamp and the settee.

Los Angeles through the Panama Canal & dumps us out in Florida after 15 days. It's turned into a trip of a lifetime, but, as my brother says, "if not now, when?" So, time to figure out trip insurance options. I think I could do the trip now based on how I feel now & I hope to be even stronger by then.

Competing for our limited resources in the new year is the plumber. Many plumbing issues were revealed by our inspection last Friday. Ahh, deferred maintenance. It's a long term project that started with the humble goal of replacing out toilet with a low-flow one. Well, a house that is 115 years old carries with it a lifetime of home repair options. But, I have a driveway & know nothing of any worry from future home repair. I'm too happy to worry. And, God knows what I need. He's got this.

All my best wishes for a joyful 2024 go out to you. Savor the good, surrender worry to God.

Love,
Lina

January 3, 2024 ☺ "Off to an amazing beginning" ☺ Lina:

Loving 2024 & it's loving me. Only 3 days in & the days have been filled w/ answered prayer.

Foremost as of January 2, yesterday, my CA 125 measure is 56, down from 428 on December 10. Normal range is 0-30. I've had only one measure lower than the current. That was shortly after my cancer surgery on November 2, 2022, at 18. By January 2023, it was 80 something, signaling the return of cancer progression.

Today, I'm feeling strong, have endurance & have several checks on last year's "to do" list. Driveway, check; junk heap outside my office door, check; focusing my daily life on God's healing power through the Resurrection & gifts of the Holy Spirit. Not necessarily in that order. Sounds pretty preachy, but it is just a wonderfully liberating approach to each day.

We had debris from our driveway construction & junk from all over our yard areas hauled away. Woohoo! And, I made another batch of David Kittams' fabulous pea soup. With the help of pea soup, Bill's bread and all those mighty prayers from loving friends & family I'm gaining weight & the cancer is receding. So, 2024 is off to an amazing beginning.

Tomorrow, I have my second infusion with the new regimen. I expect that will carry about 5 days of side effects, including fatigue & nausea. I will be catching up on my naps.

Prayers for the Peace of Christ & the Holy Spirit to bless you.

Lina

January 9, 2024 ❧ *“It’s not a proper driveway yet”* ❧ Lina:

Stronger & better. I was worried that the side effects of the treatment might get more severe. Nope. No significant side effects. I was tired for a couple days. Tiredness did not even last as long as the first treatment. I had the 2nd infusion on Thursday. I feel hungry & ambitious & it’s only Tuesday. I’m a solid 98 lbs.

On the still to do list, our car cannot make it up the hump at the driveway entrance. So, Rand is right for now. It’s not a proper driveway yet. I think I can get the van up the slope as some validation. But, I see another re-shaping in my future to smooth out the hump at the entrance. Meanwhile, I’m hoping to get my bike into the trainer & start more exercise. It’s ready. Am I?

I’m happy sitting at home enjoying the smell of our Christmas tree, but I guess we will have to take it down next week. I have many tasks on my list. Rand & I are committing small daily neatnesses. It’s also time to get documents in order for our tax preparation. We go to LA to see our accountant in early March when I also get to see my youngest brother for his birthday.

I’m celebrating God’s healing power & promise of answered prayer daily. There is so much more I hope to do. Thank you for your caring.

Enjoy the rain. Spring is almost here.

Lina

January 15, 2024 ❧ *Green things* ❧ Lina:

Wet & growing. My garden is trying to get a head start without me. Last year’s tomato plant is full of flowers. Broccoli & jalapeños are off & running. Nasturtium are taking over outside the raised beds. I see some gardening in my future.

My condition is still improving. I walked over 4 miles on Friday when Rand



While the Lexus was in the shop to address a phantom power drain, Lina carefully backed this loaner SUV over the sidewalk as a “proof of concept” – but the sedan rides too close to the ground.



Lina's beloved garden, which was permitted to go utterly feral in the months following her death. Left, one of her "raised beds", wire-enclosed to thwart the depredations of local herbivorous vermin.

Answered prayer?

Before her illness, when the humor did not strike too close to home for comfort, Lina used to allude to a famous story from *The Onion*: **God Answers Prayers Of Paralyzed Little Boy: "No," Says God.**

The early results from 2024 certainly served to bolster her confidence that in the end she and the doctors would beat the odds, and her conviction that "God is healing me." This belief helped to shore up a naturally cheerful disposition, and it was heartbreaking to see it beginning to falter in the last weeks of her life. "It's hard," she observed near the end, "living without hope."

& I took BART to the City to for an afternoon showing of *Oppenheimer* at Metreon. I sat down for a little rest on the way back. But overall I was feeling pretty strong. I'm Costco ready.

My next infusion is January 24 & before that I will get my usual blood tests & see what the numbers are.

I made it to Church in person yesterday for the first time in a very long time. It was nice. So many of my church family members pray for me every day I wanted to share what they have done for me. Fellowship matters

Rand & I are preparing to take our tree down this week. But we're taking advantage of the Monday MLK holiday & am mindful of how far we have come, despite ongoing hate & suffering. It's the ongoing growth & love that's more important to celebrate.

We are sticking close to home until the beginning of March when we go to LA to get our taxes done & lay down some preparation for our trip to see the April 8 total solar eclipse from some point at sea off Mexico. We are very excited. I'm planning for what I want to bring & how to get it to LA where we start off.

I'm enjoying the playoffs & grateful that we don't have weather like that in Buffalo. Not much news otherwise. I'm making calculations & consulting w/ the skilled professionals on how to address my driveway limitations.

Sending prayers for God's peace & joy to dominate the year.

Lina

January 24, 2024 ☺ Good numbers ☺ Lina:

Woohoo. My CA125 is 12, in the normal range & the lowest measure ever! Answered prayer. Thank you.

I have PET/CT & CT scans the first week of February. Those will show any tumor activity & the extent to which the cancer has been beaten back. It is very exciting & confirms my perception of increased strength as indicating that God is healing me.

Speaking of my energy & improved status generally, Rand & I retired our Christmas tree. Now I need to be sure to remember where we put The Box. For now, I think it will go in the closet. I actually have a goal of moving out of the storage space this year. But, the weeds in the backyard have so enjoyed the rain that I plan to work on that first. I also have the driveway issues that I need to address. I'm looking forward to these tasks because I have the energy. And, wow I'm looking forward to a beautiful spring.

That's my world for now. Thank you Lord. And thank you for your prayers & positive energy that has brought me to this exciting point.

Love & prayers for your healing & the peace of Christ go out to you.

Lina

January 31, 2024 ❧ *Only shorter* ❧ **Lina:**

Staying the course with the positive results. Funny how positive events spawn worry that something will go wrong. It seems to be common. Prayer & leaving the future in God's hands seems the best way out of my own cycle. Funny too how I can't let go of worry by force of will without prayer.

It almost feels like life before cancer when I wake up & plan the day's pursuits. My planning is about the future not about what I need to do before I die. Although I think both are important to consider once one is 70, maybe always recognizing how fragile life is & that today could be like any other, but shorter, is good to remember when considering what I should do today to be in accordance with God's plan for me. It's hard to figure out. Again the power of prayer seems to light the way.

Tuesday was my night to cook. I've returned to most of my usual duties, but I still burn out suddenly as I think I'm back to normal levels of doing. I'm not, but my improvement is so great that I think I will get there. Last night I made a chorizo & green chili pizza, one of Rand's favorites, & a big salad. Rand & I pulled weeds for our agreed upon 30 minutes. The garden really is out of hand. We filled two large paper garden-waste bags which we hid in the garbage can enclosure so they won't get soaked in the rain today. Other projects nag at me, but importantly so does the question of what I should do to give back according to God's plan for me.

Like any other day

Lina here alludes to a line (see epigraph) from Samuel Beckett: "...to recognize the good in the bad, the bad in the worst, and so grow gently old down all the unchanging days, and die one day like any other day, only shorter."

I'm trying to keep in mind that it is ok to take care of myself. But, there is so much need. It's hard to decide how & where I can fulfill my responsibilities to help out. Many of my friend & family are confronting serious health issues too. So, I'm trying to focus on the follow through on what I intend to do to help in my little corner. 2 Cor. 8:7-11.

If I can get out before today's deluge, I can do a few worthwhile things. If not, I think we will hunker down & try to stay warm & dry. This instantly summons a twinge of guilt for all the suffering souls who are not. But, I'm reminded that gratitude is the right course. Meanwhile, I'm grateful that God is healing me with modern medicine, prayer & prompting from various corners. I still need a lot of sleep & have a ways to go in weight gain & endurance. Still, I feel my strength growing daily.

Peace & love to you,
Lina

February 5, 2024 🕊 *Slow & steady* 🕊 **Lina:**

I've been doing well even if it seems slower than I think it should be. I call it my human nature that I find a worry, like the slow pace is maybe an indication of future heartbreak, even as I believe I'm getting all the way better.

I had my PET scan today & my CT scan is on Wednesday. Those tests should show that my body is winning this battle. Thank you Lord. Today the radioactive dye injection rushed through my body to light up any cancer cells. The strict high-protein diet for the preceding 24 hours & the 6 hour fast before my appointment were easier this time.

I could learn to eat this way, but it takes a bit more time for meal prep. No, bread, no milk, no fruit or starchy vegetables, no sugars or grains. But I the butter, steamed cauliflower & green beans & salad were fabulous. I could have eggs, oils, onions, cottage cheese, lettuce, olives, hard cheese & nuts. So, I made salad dressing & a big salad from authorized foods. Rand made chicken thighs w/ olive oil garlic &, yes butter. Very satisfying team work.

I got back home at about half past noon & broke my fast w/ a nice bowl of David-stye pea soup, morning coffee & biscotti. All good. Now, it's about dinner time. I've been snacking all afternoon.



Team effort (since it's been a while since her last food pic).

In a fine mental space, full of joy. I realize each day how much of a blessing a positive attitude is. There simply is no way to earn it or make it happen. But I guess I work toward following Christ's teachings to find it present & be grateful.

I send my love & prayers to you.

Lina

February 9, 2024 ❧ *Fabulosity* ❧ Lina:

Woohoo. The doctors agree that my response to treatment is fabulous. My scans identified lots of improvement, mostly "resolution" of the prior cancer activity. Lymph nodes show cancer activity is gone. There are 2 persistent nodules, but those have shrunk significantly & are on the way out. I feel good too.

I have labs next Monday & Tuesday & my next infusion on Thursday. Of course I'm looking forward to my CA125 measure. Hopefully, it will stay low. I consider my improvement to be answered prayer & I thank you for all your help & caring. I'm looking forward to celebrating Easter.

It's time to prepare for tax season. Number crunching & a trip to LA for our tax prep are on tap through March 5. Then spring & Easter. Yay.

Love to you,

Lina

February 16, 2024 ❧ *Ode to Demariay* ❧ Lina:

Progress apparently continues. I had my 4th ENHERTU infusion yesterday, Thursday, & got my CA 125 measure, down again to 9 w/ normal range of 0-35 & last reading of 12 also normal. I think normal range means the cancer antigen (CA) being produced shows the cancer is not increasing but not whether this is remission. In any case, the scans & CA125 show that the cancer is on the run & I feel the win in the power of the resurrection. It can't hide now.

I'm not feeling side effects from the infusion yet. With this intervention I get mild side effects after a few days, probably because the premeds that they give me before starting the infusion delay side effects. Answered prayer continues to show its power.

We continue to eat well & to enjoy my new vigor. I weighed in yesterday at 104.7, up from 3 weeks ago at 102, with clothes. Bill's bread & pea soup are helping.

We walked to BART & back home on Wednesday when we went to see the new *Dune* at the Metreon in IMAX. I walked over 5 miles total for the day. I was pooped but marshaled by Thursday & went to bed early.

I also got to my desk yesterday to crunch my tax data for our meeting with our accountant in L.A. Yes we still do it in person. But, I will get to see my youngest brother on his birthday while we're there. His cancer measures show no remaining cancer following his proton therapy for prostate cancer. He is glad that he could & did make the choice for a non-surgery, & non- traditional radiation option.

We head for LA March 1 for a few days. We also plan to leave with friends some of our stuff we are taking on our cruise so we don't need to fly with it in April. The future's so bright I have to wear shades, as the lyric goes. I'm mindful though of my tendency to forget praise & gratitude with so much to be grateful for having relieved my worry. I am praying for my focus to remain in gratitude & not in the details of daily tasks & frustration.

One other high point to share. I had to go to Kaiser's medical records department yesterday to order copies of the actual scanned images from my PET & CT last week. (Unlike Cedars who provides discs at the same time & place the scans are completed). I was told at Kaiser that the records department had closed & everyone was now working from home, but I could find information hanging on the door. But, no the door was open & who did I see? Demari-yay! He was patiently helping someone navigate the difficulties of being in the right place & getting to what they needed. He showed amazing consideration.

When my turn came, Demariay did not give me paperwork to order the scans & wait for them to arrive hoping my mailbox would not be vandalized again. He said, "I still got you." And, he could & did pull up the scans, burn them to disc & give them to me then & there so I can give them to my doctors at Cedars. As I told his coworker who was saying how she taught him everything, in response to my praise about his competence, "you can't teach that kind of humanity." She agreed. I told him also that I reported his amazing help previously on my blog & that he is a known

hero at my church. He said, I guess I have to visit then. I forgot to tell him where, so I plan to return.

The world is so full of wonders. It is hard to remember that when I watch the news of daily tragedies. But, it's the people & all the good that they do every day that makes our world go forward. Thank you all.

Peace & love,
Lina

March 8, 2024 ❖ *Original equipment* ❖ **Lina:**

Sorry for the long gap, but we've been on the go the last few weeks.

I had my 5th infusion yesterday. My CA125 was 10, up a tick from 9 last time but not concerning bc it is still well within the normal range of 0-35. My growing strength & energy levels also suggest continuing improvement.

I have a scan next week to look at my kidney function bc I have a blockage from my left side which may or may not resolve on its own. We will have better data w/ the scan results. Despite the doctors' encouragement that people function fine w/ one kidney, I would like to keep the original equipment if possible. The options for addressing the blockage through intervention are not so good. So, prayers for this are my best option.

We just got back from LA on Monday night, so I barely got my lab work done in time before the infusion. Our tax work is done though. Yay! Also we returned to ongoing plumbing work & have had to address the wreckage that accompanies improvements. We have a new toilet, new main sewer line under the house & properly vented toilet, bathroom & kitchen sinks. Lots of shiny new copper pipe decorates the back of the house & we will not die from carbon monoxide because of the vent pipe under the house that was no longer secured to its exit & was leaking.

I have new projects now related to our plumbing that have pushed ahead of the driveway. I need to fix the missing tile, so we can get the sink out of the bedroom, clean out our tubs of cleaning supplies from under the kitchen sink & replace the shelf lining there. Then there are the lingering tasks, like securing the dishwasher in place that has been lingering for years now. Rand is glad to have his handy girl back, mostly. My future projects frighten him, but he still helps as I ask.



On the roof of the Los Angeles Athletic Club, where we overnighted.

Going out in tile

I here reproduce photos from Lina's tile-cutting project. As part of 2024's costly plumbing upgrade, a bathroom sink was removed so that the pipes could be vented. Replacing the bog-standard white ceramic tiles was simple; cutting circles out of them not so much. Lina the Handy Girl rose to the occasion magnificently.



Disassembled. Below: Lina's improvised tile-cutting scheme.



Those are the exciting developments & I am very grateful for traveling mercies, your prayers & well wishes & answer answered prayer. I was able to enjoy our recent travels much more than formerly. Now we are planning for our trip to see the April 8 eclipse from sea.

Blessings to you,
Lina

March 12, 2024 ❧ *Go kidneys!* ❧ **Lina:**

I had a renal scan yesterday because my left kidney had been blocked from draining into my bladder, which eventually would kill that one off. The blockage has resolved, no blockage & I won't lose the kidney after all. It was a side worry since November '22 when the blockage was detected after surgery. My surgeon at Cedars advised me to not go for intervention, but to wait to see if it resolved. Answered prayer again.

My Kaiser oncologist advised that a stent or surgery were not good options because of the disease process that likely was the cause. This is another indication that my cancer is being destroyed. My CA 125, at 10, also is encouraging. Of course, I'm grateful for my healing & hope for the same for others. There is so much suffering in our world. We need to be kind to one another.

Rand & I continue to address home repair. The kitchen is a wreck because I had to dig out some tools from the storage closet. Yikes!

I have formulated a plan to fix the bathroom tile so the plumber can put the bathroom sink back. I've taken initial steps of filling the wall with plastic packing material to support the sheet rock, marking & cutting the sheet rock. Cutting the tile will be the biggest challenge, after finding the daily motivation to fix it in the first place. Rand says maybe we should "call the man," but I think I can do it & it's become a personal challenge. My dad would have approved.

I will see folks live at church on Sunday since I agreed to speak about my faith journey during Lent. Thank you for caring about me.

Lina

March 24, 2024 ☸ *Tile style* ☸ Lina:

Project 2 completed. It was a challenge but the tile is done & the plumber is coming Wednesday to put the sink back in the bathroom.

Next week will be a flurry of activity. Tomorrow I will have blood tests in preparation for my infusion on Thursday. I'm looking forward to seeing my new numbers. & will have my CA 125 by Thursday. I'm up to 106 pounds.

I am off blood pressure medication now & my BP has been good, 115/74 or better. That leaves only thyroid as a daily medication. I've cut that in half & blood tests will show the effect of the reduction. I may be able to get off that. I also have a PET-CT scan April 1 which will show the status of tumor activity now.

I got the pneumonia vaccine two days ago which gave me a sore arm & fatigue, but no other apparent side effects. I know several people who are struggling to recover from pneumonia. I should be protected now. Another miracle of modern medicine.

I went to church in person today. It was joyful. Folks were happy to see how much improved I am. It was nice to share fellowship for Palm Sunday. It is a special Holy Week for me to be grateful for the promise of the resurrection & healing with so much suffering going on in the world & so much healing that is needed. Hope & prayer abound.

We head to LA a week from Thursday to catch our cruise & watch the eclipse from sea. I need to pack still, but I have a pretty good idea of what I need to bring, until it's time to pack. Then I won't remember stuff. It's time to start my list.

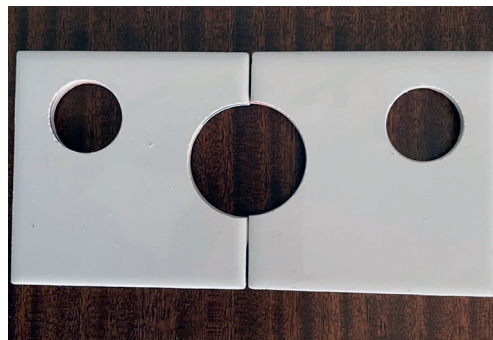
I will let you know how the tests go. My prayers & warm wishes go out to you.

Lina

April 2, 2024 ☸ *New worries* ☸ Lina:

Sigh. New worries continue. But, perhaps that is just life. Easter was & today is beautiful.

I had a video conference with my Kaiser oncologist today to discuss the PET-CT scan from yesterday. My CA125 was up 2 points from the last



Precision cuts.



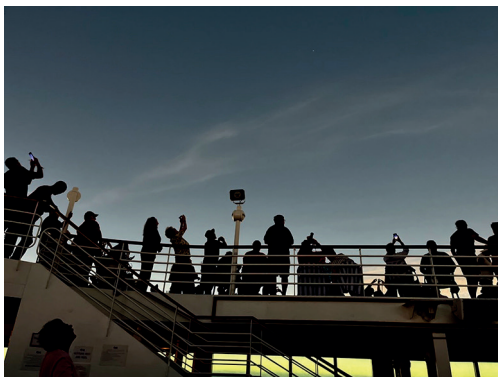
Preparing to mount the tiles.



And...it's a wrap, with the sink shortly to return from its exile at the foot of the bed (much rejoicing). Truly her father's daughter.



Between the onset of the pandemic in 2020 and cancer two years later, Lina's church attendance during her latter years was mainly via video link. She made an exception for Easter Sunday.



Above: Totality at sea. Below: Lina in Huatulco the next day.



reading, now 13. Still well within the normal range of 0-35. But it has gone up 2 points each of the past two readings. The lowest was 9. But, my Kaiser oncologist said the PET shows increased cancer activity & so she is terminating my ENHERTU treatments. My next was supposed to be on April 23. It is discouraging news. However, I have an appointment in tow days with my Cedars oncologist & will get his advice.

The PET scan report is hard to understand, but I don't like the idea of terminating treatment yet. The report identifies both areas of tumor shrinkage & one of increased size that it said could be a benign cyst. The report seemed equivocal about whether ENHERTU is no longer being effective. So, we will gather more information. My Kaiser Oncologist also referred me to an oncologist colleague in Walnut Creek.

Meanwhile, we leave for our eclipse-viewing cruise on Friday from L.A. I will see my doctor at Cedars the day before. I'm still feeling good. I've gained 18 pounds since November & now tip the scale at 105. It's hard to guess what God has in mind for me, but I think a cruise is just what I need right now.

Rand's brother, Greg arrives tomorrow, Wednesday afternoon. We fly to L.A. on Thursday & embark on Friday afternoon. I can't imagine better fun than seeing the eclipse in such good company. I will post pictures.

When we return, I have a driveway to fix & a garden to plant. I don't know where my treatment journey will take me next, but uncertainty has been with us many times. Trust God & enjoy gratitude is my choice.

Thank you for your prayers & encouragement. Love to you.

Lina

April 10, 2024 ☾ Eclipse chasing ☽ Lina:

Wow. What a wondrous world.

We are at our last Mexican stop, Huatulco. Tomorrow is a sea day, then Costa Rica. We started our trip w/ some challenges. When I woke up on Thursday morning at around 6:30 am, I got the notification that our flight to LAX was cancelled & we had been rebooked to a plane that left at 6:25 am. The only available flight to L.A. that day left at 6:00 pm, had a stop in Atlanta & would have arrived at around 11:30 pm. Not going to work w/

my 3:30 doctor appointment & picking up the stuff I left w/ my friend back in March.

We flew to Burbank instead, arriving at 11:30 am & took a Lyft to our car rental place by LAX. The line was impossible. After half an hour, we hot a Zip car from the parking lot at the site & got on the freeway. I called ahead & my doctor saw me at 4:00 pm. We made a plan for researching options until I return. We dropped our bags at the hotel, dropped the car off & walked back to our hotel.

Next day we took the airport shuttle from our hotel & connected perfectly w/ the cruise transfer service. We went to the ship on the cruise line's bus & embarked on our journey. We were tired & slept well as the ship headed for Cabo San Lucas where we arrived on Sunday for a day on the beach after Zoom Church.

Monday was spectacular w/ clear skies to view the eclipse. Yesterday we were at sea, literally. Ahhh, peaceful. I have the large amount of curated food options that we brought in 2 extra carry-ons. I hope to bring the bags back in my suitcase, empty.

Those are the highlights. I learning more about God's boundless love & patience on this part of my journey.

Love to you,
Lina

April 14, 2024 ☺ All at sea ☺ Lina:

Today we are at sea, literally. Yesterday we were in Costa Rica & went on a crocodile excursion about an hour from the port of Puntarenas. It was hot, 96 degrees, but nice in the shade of the river boat & nice cool bottles of water. I am glad to have been strong enough for this. Yay.

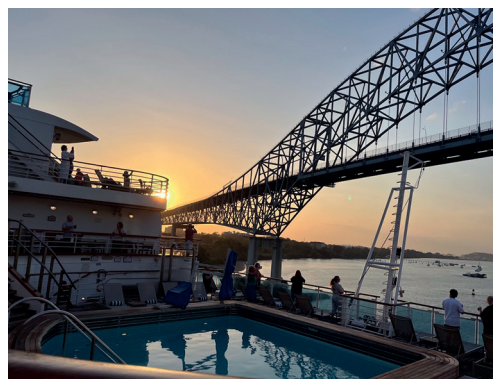
Tomorrow we go through the Panama Canal. What an adventure without leaving the boat. Then, on to Cartagena, Columbia where we have a local beach excursion booked, emphasis on staying within safe venues.

I was sorry to miss Church today We have lost 2 hours & I my sense of time. I do enjoy sleeping in knowing it is still early in my usual time zone.

Love to you.
Lina



Catching some rays on the Rio Grande de Tárcoles, Costa Rica.



Approaching the Panama Canal at dawn.



Cartagena, our penultimate foreign port of call. Greg was vastly pleased that with this he had now visited all the major populated landmasses. We skipped the city and took a tailbone-jarring speedboat to a lush beach resort, on the return from which our craft was attacked and briefly stalled by a rogue sandbar.



Our ride, loitering with intent offshore at Grand Cayman.



"Welcome to Hell."

April 18, 2024 ☺ *Bein' in the Caribbean* ☺ Lina:

Grand Cayman, last port before returning to the US at Fort Lauderdale on Saturday. Tomorrow is a sea day. God's love is on display everywhere. It is a subtly shared common ground that I see appreciated by those who strive to follow Jesus, from the tacky t-shirts that say Jesus is my boss to the public bus here that the driver said we would know his bus, the one to take us back to port, by its "God Bless" inscription on the front. I enjoy it, but some seem to be annoyed by God acknowledgements. Curious.

I have a bunch of doctor stuff next week after our return Saturday night. I'm trying to figure out whether I should make the trip to LA for a consultation about another study. It's not one that I think is right for me, but the consultation could influence whether I might be considered for others. I don't know whether I can accomplish the same objective w/o going. I will figure it out when I get back.

I have a consultation in Walnut Creek on Thursday to get a second opinion on my treatment w/ Kaiser going forward. But, I will have at least the one infusion on Monday of the current drugs. My Kaiser oncologist wants to stop it & says it has stopped being effective based on the last tests. My Cedars oncologist doesn't agree but says, "it's tricky" because the current treatment *may* [emphasis added —Ed.] have stopped being effective. Hopefully, the Kaiser Walnut Creek specialist can provide some analysis & recommendations. Up in the air again.

Speaking of which, the air is soft & warm here, low of 80 high of 85 and humid. There is a nice breeze & a Caribbean casual feel, mellow. We head for Florida in about an hour, and lose another hour overnight. We arrive about 7:00 am local time & must disembark soon there after. Our flight home is not until 6:30 pm. Who knows what adventures we will encounter. It has been a wonderful trip.

Love to you,
Lina

April 22, 2024 ☺ *Bummer* ☺ Lina:

We made it back on Saturday night at about 11:30 pm. It was a long day of travel. Unfortunately, I'm not just tired from the trip.

My CA125 measure from labs yesterday came in at 50. So, I'm above the normal range now. My Kaiser oncologist terminated my use of the ENHURTU because it is no longer being effective. I did not get my infusion today although I was told that I would continue on ENHURTU until I saw the second opinion doctor. I get a second opinion from a Kaiser specialist in endometrial cancer on Thursday in Walnut Creek. Things change.

Tomorrow Rand & I head for LA to see the Cedars doctor on Wednesday who heads up its trials for endometrial cancer. I saw her for the other trial preliminaries in October last year. She recommended me for a phase 2 trial of a new immunotherapy treatment. I have to see her in person & give blood. We will head home immediately after we are done with that, hopefully before rush hour begins. In the morning I will go to Walnut Creek

It is a bummer that the cancer is not done with me. We will see what is next. I hope you are not discouraged by my ups & downs. I will continue to follow God's plan. I still feel much better than I was in early December. So, I will try to do my best with that & be grateful.

Love to you.

Lina

April 27, 2024 ☺ On the go ☺ Lina:

Go, go, go. We've been on the road a lot & tomorrow we head back to LA for a CT & EKG, preliminaries to starting the clinical trial through Cedars. This is not what I expected a week ago when weighing my options.

A week ago when we returned from our eclipse cruise I thought I would get my infusion at Kaiser on Monday. That did not happen pending the second opinion at Kaiser in Walnut Creek. So, we went to LA on Tuesday night & met with the Cedars team to learn about the trial & had a blood test & ECG. I needed an additional CT & EKG to see whether I met study criteria & to get baselines. We still did not know whether we would go for the study. After the appointment, we hit the road home & got back before dark. We don't usually have this kind of turnaround. But, I had the 2nd opinion appointment at 8:45 am. scheduled for Thursday.

During our drive home, Kaiser called & my appointment was reset to 10:30, yay. We had a good night's sleep. Dr. Bookman at Kaiser had all the knowledge & advice we could have hoped for. There are some options

Unilateralism

I'm not an oncologist and I don't play one on TV (a cultural reference that may be lost on some of our younger readers), so I try not to be unfair to Dr. H at Kaiser, but we both thought it rather preemptory of her to discontinue Lina's therapy without so much as an advance word, much less a consultation, and we were neither of us altogether convinced that the outfit's bean counters hadn't influenced this decision.

Lina was accordingly left effectively untreated beginning shortly before we boarded the *Emerald Princess* and throughout the spring. Once she was enrolled in the clinical trial at Cedars, there was yet another interval while the sponsors made certain that the previous drugs had been cleared out of her system.

The trial, as we will see, may have yielded useful data for the researchers (for values of "useful data" = "does not work on this flavor"), but since it was to prove after a couple of months inefficacious in Lina's case – may even have done more harm than good, according to one clinician in a subsequent consultation – the practical consequence appears to have been to allow her cancer to romp unimpeded by any medical countermeasures well into summer. I can't help but feel that this ultimately shaved months off her life.



On the road again.

that could be tried, but the odds of something more than slowing the progression are remote, at best, although perhaps fewer side effects. He authorized my infusion at Kaiser Oakland for the next day at 3:00pm. We thought great, I would have the infusion, see whether ENHURTU should continue & wait on appointments at Cedars as a backup.

Cedars called the next day & said I could start treatment May 15. I explained that I planned to have the infusion & could not start the trial drugs until 28 days after that. I did not think that the difference between having the infusion on Friday instead of the Monday would matter much. I was wrong. [see sidebar, previous page —*Ed.*]

The study has a 21 day period between the exam & initial tests within which treatment must start, or the initial intake process has to be redone. Then Cedars called with the appointments on Monday for the CT & EKG & said they would start treatment the week of May 6. So, I had to choose whether to have the infusion or not. Rand & I discussed it. I prayed for discernment & we decided that the trial seemed the best option.

I talked w/ the folks at Cedars & they said my test results did not disqualify me, nor would the upcoming CT or EKG. I could not reschedule the Kaiser infusion until May 14. That is a long way out if I wash out for the study, but those are the options for now. No guarantees either way. I am just going forward trusting God's plan knowing it might not be a cure. But, doors are opening to make my participation in the study possible.

A friend in LA is willing to put us up, which is a big help. We have to get our oil changed, do laundry & repack today. But, we can do that. Rand has packed audiobooks to keep us entertained during our drive. I will miss Church tomorrow but maybe I can Zoom from the road. No time to wash the bugs off the car, but I cleaned the windshield & gassed up.

Please pray for us. Thank you.

Lina

April 30, 2024 🌸 *Briefly home* 🌸 Lina:

Nice to be home. We got back last night before dark. Today we are just resting & doing a bit of debris culling & mail sorting. Tomorrow maybe we will get something done to begin our many projects, while we wait to get a call saying when we need to go back.

I had a CT with contrast & an EKG yesterday & we were done shortly after noon. We headed for the freeway which was already in progress. The drive was lovely even on the 5.

I got the CT report today & it shows some progression of the cancer, a few new spots. I won't get the EKG results until maybe Friday. So, I think going with the clinical trial was the right decision. They said I would start next week but no date certain yet.

I might get my suitcases sorted out before we need to go again. We will need to go down every week for the first month at least. Then we go every few weeks for a treatment after that. If I have a schedule in advance, I will probably fly back and forth.

There's not much else that I can report for now. Thank you for your prayers & kind wishes.

Lina

May 1, 2024 ☽ *Clinical trial is a go* ☽ Lina:

The trial is a go. I have an infusion next Wednesday in LA. I could not really decipher the test results but the results were adequate to proceed with the trial.

The infusion is scheduled for 3 hours. That is about the same time required for my first chemotherapy session back in July'22.

It will be another road trip next week. I think they plan to give me blood tests on day 8 following the infusion to check my status & any side effects. But, it might be day 15.

We probably will stay w/ a friend again & return home after the infusion assuming I feel ok. If I'm feeling perky enough, we may fly in & out same day for the day 8 (or day 15) monitoring.

I'm vaguely anxious about the potential side effects, but the way forward just has risks. Not much to be done other than continuing w/ a good diet, exercise & whatever else we find necessary.

Rand is cooking his traditional chicken tacos for our friends' Cinco de Mayo party this weekend. I think it is his 39th year as the Great Taco Wallah. [34th, I think. Our hosts skipped town in 2005 (Rome) and in 2023



The Taco Wallah at his station, since 1990.

Over a hot stove

I've cooked tacos for my friends Don and Paula, who hosted their first "Cinco de Mayo" party as lonely California expats in Boston ca. 1985, since I caught up with them in Our Nation's Capital five years after that. They relocated back to the Bay Area by the following spring, and I have slaved cheerfully over a series of hot stoves since then every year except for two, when D&P hid out in Rome (2005) and in Mexico City (2023) on the appointed dates.

Lina put in her first appearance at one of these events in 1996, and, with the exception of our hosts' absences, was in attendance every May through the end of her life.

(Mexico City) —*Ed.*] He cooks about 60 tacos with all the fixin's for his adoring crowd.

Peace & Joy to you,
Lina

May 11, 2024 ☺ *On trial* ☺ Lina:

Back. Sorry for the long gap. First, there was no news but Cinco de Mayo festivities and then, things were evolving. God's perfect timing & answered prayer continue to bless me.

I started the clinical trial on Wednesday in LA at Cedar's Samuel Oschin Cancer Center clinic. It's a difficult place to get to because of all the traffic. It took us about an hour to get there from 18 miles away where we stayed w/ a friend. We are still working out the logistics for the future visits. My next appointment is May 23 for labs. Then I go back for a the second infusion of the projected 16 in early June. The other part of the treatment is 2 pills, twice a day, 12 hours apart with food.

The infusion part of the treatment administer Ipilimuman ("Ipi"), a drug that has been used for cancer treatment for years. That is paired with the trial drug, RGX-104. RGX-104 attacks the cancer in two ways. First, it disrupts the cancer cells production of a protein that makes it invisible to the immune system. Second, it boosts the body's production of T cells that attack the cancer. At least that is my understanding of it.

Each round of treatment is a 28 day cycle with labs required in between. So I will need to be there about twice a month. After 4 cycles, the Ipi will be discontinued & I won't get the infusion part. The pills will continue indefinitely depending on my response.

The Ipi has a long list of side effects, many of which I have experienced w/ the Lenvima. If I have bad side effects from the Ipi, the dose may be reduced or stopped early.

I felt better on Thursday, but yesterday was rough. I took anti-nausea drugs & aspirin & stayed didn't get even a mile of walking in. Rand cooked his amazing Bachelor Casserole & I sucked it in. Today I'm feeling much better, stronger & mostly pain free. I'm able to exercise & my appetite is back. All indications are positive now.

I also found a gardener to help me beat back my spring jungle. It's amazing how the rain caused such growth. I can't get into the back yard without tramping over the weeds that stick all over my clothes. Yay for helping hands.

So that's the up to the minute news. God's peace & joy to you.

Lina

May 15, 2024 ❧ *A new routine* ❧ Lina:

Establishing a new routine. Today starts the second week of my new treatment regimen. I take the new RGX-104 pills for 5 days on, two days off. So, Mondays & Tuesdays I don't take it. I started back today, taking it twice daily. My schedule of related appointments is filling in.

Next Wednesday I go to LA for labs. I'm flying in at 11:00 am, taking a Lyft the 11 miles to Cedars (a one hour drive) & flying home at 4:00. Rand will stay home for this one. Hopefully I can manage the travel to the airport on BART. Then we go back June 5 for an infusion of the Ipi. assuming my lab work is ok. I will continue with infusions every 28 days. I don't know how often I will need to go for labs at 2 week intervals.

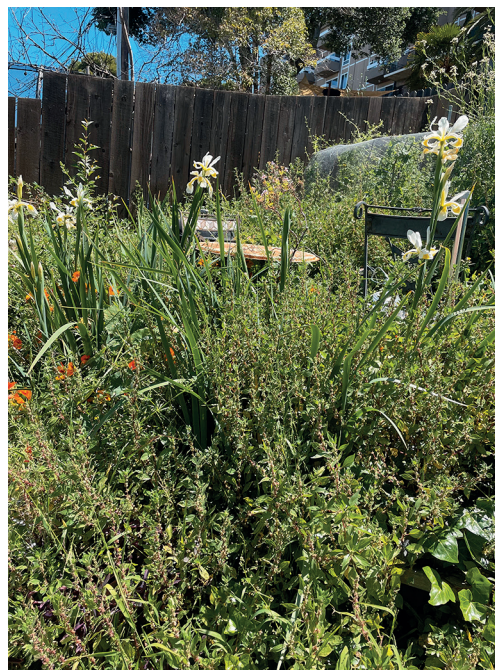
My fatigue has kept me from doing much. I'm barely getting a mile of walking in. Costco is right out currently. But, I feel better today. We shall see whether resumption of the RGX pills will cause the return of fatigue or whether it's the Ipi side effects that caused it, evidenced by further easing. Meanwhile, I am enjoying sedentary things like board games w/ Rand.

I found a gardener to help with my weed jungle. I'm grateful for that & looking forward to enough clearing of weeds to allow me to put in some vegetables. But, the raised beds are still full of weeds.

We have planned our usual Memorial Day long weekend with our friend Gail at the American river. It will be strange without Ravi. We will plan a little remembrance party there.

It was so nice to see my friend Patt was able to attend Church in person on Sunday, although our Zoom worshipers missed her for our after Church fellowship. I'm hoping to make it in person again soon.

Many projects remain to be completed. I have my eye on the driveway now that the gardener has pulled the weeds out front & cut stuff way back.



The garden overtaken by unwanted vegetation. It was, I am afraid, to look far, far worse the following year before it ever got better.

That's all the news for now. I send love & prayers for your peace & joyful growth each day.

Lina

May 25, 2024 ☽ *Riparian idyll* ☽ Lina:

Greetings from the road. I'm up in the Eldorado Forest about 50 miles south of Tahoe. It's our usual Memorial Day weekend for the past 20 years or so. I had enough energy to make the 3 1/2 hour drive. Well worth it, but the lead up was kind of tiring.

I flew to LA on Wednesday morning & got back home at about 6:00 pm. I gave blood & met with my nurse contact & reviewed my lab results. Then the cleaning crew came on Thursday morning. This required us to finally remove the layers of suitcases & bags from our vacation & last trip to LA. That was a very necessary & good achievement but tiring. Then we packed for the river, mostly Friday early, & headed for the river.

My lab results Wednesday did not include a CA125 measure because my last one was not long enough ago. My next one will be on June 5 when I return for my second infusion & labs. Then we will get an idea on the effect. I will have a CT scan July 2 and my third infusion on July 3. Two weeks before that, Juneteenth, I will get labs. Plenty of travel in our summer plan. This all assumes that I can continue with the in the trial based on the effect & tolerance of side effects.

The side effects have been significant but tolerable. I've had itching & fatigue primarily. My bloodwork has been good. I am tired enough that I'm not planning any trips to Costco currently. I do feel like the treatment is working. So, onward I go.

Meanwhile, my new gardener has helped by weeding the garden jungle, having already cleared the front weed patch. I have about 6 bags of yard waste & a full green bin ready to go out. Hopefully, Orozco will put them out while we are up here. Otherwise we will get to it next week.

I will enjoy resting in the beautiful setting in the company of Rand & our old friend Gail. We miss Ravi of course. He loved the river. Love to you as we treasure each day.

Lina



View from the dacha at Redacted Creek. We were typically enlisted to help "open" the cabin on Memorial Day and "close" it in September. This was to be L's last visit: she was too ill by Labor Day.

June 2, 2024 ☺ *Zooming in to services* ☺ Lina:

Ahhh. Spring has sprung again. I've been especially tired the past few weeks. But I'm coming along I think. I'm so grateful I can attend the Zoom option for my church. It was a covid thing but now many seniors and others of us who could not get to church can share that fellowship. Good tech.

I really have not done much since we got home from the river. I have ambitions to get to the laundry tomorrow, in time to pack for our next LA excursion on Tuesday. I have completed 371 consecutive days in Spanish on Duolingo

We enjoyed dinner here at home with our friend Robert. He & Rebecca are back from their spring trip to Puerto Vallarta where they maintain residency. Today is their anniversary. Rebecca is down w/ a cold. So she stayed home last night. Rand did most of the dinner labors. I did prepare the salad & marinate the ahi while Rand & Robert attended a political fundraiser in Berkeley.

The gardner has made significant progress in the backyard but there are many garden casualties. That Japanese Maple never got in the ground after years of intentions. It could come back, but it doesn't look like it. My bay tree & blueberries are doing fine along with the herbs.

Tuesday will be my completion of round 1 on the trial drug. It seems like a long 28 days. I'm hoping that my doctors will adjust my dose to something with fewer side effects, less itching, fatigue & gastric discontent would be welcome. But, I should have an updated CA125 & I'm hoping for encouraging news. I also am hoping to get back to my exercise routine which has not been in effect. Such are the current challenges. I can feel improvement but the side effects are kind of obscuring that. Cycle 2 starts Wednesday. Thank you for your cards, prayers & good wishes.

Enjoy,
Lina

June 6, 2024 ☺ *Bad numbers* ☺ Lina:

Gulp. Ok, so my CA125 spiked up, not down from 386. The reading for Wednesday was 2,560. Good thing I was sitting down. My Cedars oncologist says that the trial drug is so new that there is not data on aberrations



Alleged progress in the alleged garden.

Washed out

We know, at least, that she was not saddled with a placebo, but for all the good it did as a corrective for carcinomatosis, the drug might as well have been. When the Big Pharma “sponsor” of the study saw Lina’s numbers, their operatives shrank back, made the sign of the cross, and kicked Lina off the clinical trial forthwith. This was, I believe, to end our drives down to Cedar-Sinai for all time.

Upon application Dr. H – a tad reluctantly, as it seemed to us – referred us to Kaiser’s Dr. Bookman in Walnut Creek for further consultation. Dr. B, we both thought, had many qualities we had not discerned in his Oakland colleague. He was forthcoming where she was reticent, and while he no more than she held out any long-term hope, he appeared more flexible as to therapeutic options, suggesting that a resumption of ENHERTU, which Dr. H had ruled out, might set the disease back on its heels for a while after such an interval away.

Regarding the failure of the clinical trial, Dr. Bookman made an interesting observation (I paraphrase from memory): “Sometimes these clinical trials can actually make things worse.” Wait, and no one here or at Cedars happened to mention this before we enrolled? “Forget it, Jake – it’s Cancertown.”

in CA125 readings. But, we decided to try to get an earlier CT scan to get more data. I think I would feel worse if the number was an accurate measure.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, my doctor discontinued the infusions because of the side effects that I was experiencing, which we think it is causing, itching & rashes.

Also, we are holding the RGX104 for a week per the manufacturer’s recommendations to give my digestive tract time to settle down. I’m scheduled to resume next Wednesday at a stepped-down dose, 100 mg twice daily.

These have been some difficult decisions as I try to figure out whether to leave the trial. I have been in prayer & feel the current course is the right one. I am glad I don’t need to rely on only my evaluation. I feel the peace.

So, I’m ready to pack for LA at the time I find out when I can get the CT. Thank Rand for loading up a thumb drive so we can listen to audio books. We are currently listening to a novel about the period leading up to & following Julius Cesar’s rise & murder, around 40 BC in a book called *Dictator*. It is the last of a trilogy based on the speeches and correspondences of Cicero. Amazing how contemporary the themes are.

Rand has many more books for us to enjoy. For now, we are glad to be home as the Bay fog air conditioning kicks in. It was about 104 degrees inland yesterday & 98 when we got home. Yikes.

Love & God’s Peace to you,
Lina

June 14, 2024 ☽ “The study is over for me” ☽ Lina:

Sorry again for the long interval. Lots going on on the ground.

We went to LA on Monday for a CT scan to see whether my CA125 jump was consistent w/ disease progression. It was. The study is over for me because the trial drug was ineffective. Tumors have grown larger.

I had a televisit w/ my Kaiser oncologist to discuss next steps in light of everything. I have a follow-up visit on Tuesday w/ the 2nd opinion Dr. in Walnut Creek on Tuesday. But, basically the plan is to begin a different infusion regimen at Kaiser, trying to hold the line.

We got back home on Wednesday, June 12, the day before my driver's license was set to expire. We stopped off at the DMV in Newhall & I was able to pass the written test, required to renew after age 70. So, I was able to complete the test, get my picture taken & get a temporary renewal until the new one comes in the mail. Oh joy. I don't even care that I will have that terrible picture going forward. I guess my vanity does have limits after all.

Rand & I enjoyed a fantastic birthday dinner last night at Saffron. I ate a lot. Then we came home & I had a good night sleep. Ahh, simple pleasures.

That's about all I can say, except that God is good all the time. I don't have the anxiety that one would expect. I rest in God's hands.

Blessings to you,
Lina

June 18, 2024 ❧ *Dueling oncologists* ❧ Lina:

The plan is decided. So, I go forward with another ENHERTU infusion tomorrow. I saw the second opinion Dr. at Kaiser Walnut Creek & he thinks it is a good chance for treatment at this juncture, which my Oakland oncologist is against. But, she has said previously that she would go along with it. Tomorrow 8:30 am. Hopefully, it will happen without a problem. I had labs today, so I will get a new CA125 reading tomorrow.

I had agreed that I would go forward with Doxil because my Kaiser oncologist thought it was the way to go. But after talking w/ Dr. Bookman, I think his assessment is best & he, like I, was concerned about the Doxil side effects. He also has much more experience in treating my type of cancer. I get to see the dentist on Thursday for a cleaning. He said that was fine too.

I feel much better about this treatment option. So, once more into the breach. I will keep you posted as things develop.

I have been thinking a lot about Christ's teaching to love one another. I have a new standard for evaluating my actions, Is it loving? Calling other drivers names? Nope. Criticism? Sometimes. Patience, goodness, kindness? Yep. It's funny, dogs are almost always loving. And, like us, it's fear that messes things up. Thank you for all the birthday well wishes.

Peace & love to you.
Lina



Saffron, an Afghan restaurant in Oakland's tony Rockridge District. Lina was wont to make much of her "corn allergy," and was startled on a subsequent visit to learn that all Saffron's courses, which she had consumed without ill effect, were cooked in corn oil.

June 21, 2024 ☞ *Her last summer* ☞ Lina:

Summer. So glad I get to see another.

It's only two days since my infusion. But, it seems that I have better energy. I managed to fulfill my Thursday cooking duties last night, w/ red snapper & salad w/ arugula, watermelon, feta & balsamic reduction. Oh yum. I stole the recipe from Saffron where we had it on my birthday.

So now it is just doing day to day healing. I won't have measures until July. But, I will see how I feel to discern the effects. There are lots of family & friend birthdays in the summer. I'm so fortunate to have them & hope I don't fail to get my greetings off to remind them how much they mean to me.

Meanwhile, the cleaning crew made everything nice & clean. The gardener got the weeds. And, I had my teeth cleaned yesterday. Things are sparkling. I'm resting in Good's abiding love. Thank you for being part of it.

Peace & joy to you.

Lina

July 3, 2024 ☞ *Lucid dreaming* ☞ Lina:

Up & running. I have finally figured out how to create a post update since CaringBridge went to a new format & was not working for a while.

There is not much to report except that I'm feeling much better. I get my next infusion On July 11 & will get labs the Tuesday before. Then I will get a CA125 update. I'm expecting good news based on my increasing energy levels. I'm doing laundry & am not exhausted any more when I do small tasks. I'm up to a mile a day of walking again, not my prior 3 mile usual but I'll take it.

Rand, our friend Robert & I did an excursion on Monday that was big fun. I went & drove a fancy new electric car called a Lucid, that has a 475 mile range. Wow the power of the thing is impressive. We won't be buying one anytime soon & it would not get up my driveway any better than my Lexus. After the drive we went & caught the vista from the Marin Headlands, since we were in Corte Madera to see the Lucid. It's a new & struggling company with brilliant engineering. Their SUV is the ultimate contrast to Tesla's new ugliest SUV ever conceived. Still, having a Lucid was a fantasy that I'm over now.



Infused at Oakland Kaiser.

Meanwhile, I expect my driveway to be my next project, assuming my energy holds. Blessings to you & yours for a safe & joyful 4th of July.

Lina

July 10, 2024 ☺ **Better numbers** ☺ Lina:

Moving in the right direction. My CA125 is 732, down from 2,482. I would have thought the current reading was high, but this is good considering.

I have enjoyed attending church in person for the past two Sundays. Being able to do that is an excellent indicator of my progress.

I have my second infusion for my return to ENHERTU tomorrow. Whether the good trend will continue is in God's hands. It's efficacy is expected to decline as the resistant cells are left behind. However, I feel increasingly better, stronger, better appetite, & walking more since the first return dose on June 19. I broke 2 miles yesterday & felt good

I'm able to look forward to undertaking various projects that need to be done. The driveway of course. People regularly park encroaching the area in front where I have been very happy to have available usually for parking until I get the area shaped properly to park inside. But, I remind myself how long we have managed without a place to park & leave a civilized note requesting them not block our driveway, remembering that patience is loving. I'm learning to remember more often to ask, "Is this loving?"

That's about all the news from here. Peace & love to you with my gratitude for your concern & prayers.

Lina

July 11, 2024 ☺ **Car talk** ☺ Lina:

Roll with changes. So, no ENHERTU today. My Kaiser oncologist is holding my treatment until next Wednesday because I'm taking a course of antibiotics for a UTI (urinary infection). It caused a lot of anxiety & checking w/ other doctors & trying to get the infusion today. Her decision is the more cautious course but I have accepted this now, figuring that I will follow God's timing & be happy.

My second opinion oncologist in Walnut Creek said it was ok to go ahead



Late in life Lina began to participate in the stock market, a realm regarding which I have retained a Skimpole-like ignorance. Among her investments was "Lucid," a Tesla rival backed by Arab petrodollars (hedging their bets?). In July we ventured to their dealership in Marin County so she could test-drive her money.



With our chum R.I. Williams at the Marin Headlands.



Lina's "classic" Datsun 280ZX. She was just the second owner. This was a limited "tenth anniversary" edition of 3000. Of these, 2500 were painted in gold and black, just 500 in this red & black color scheme. Each car has a serial number. One of the other 499 sold in 2023 for almost a quarter of a million dollars, but this had been meticulously preserved and had but 29(!) miles on it. But maybe...

today but also said that a 28 day interval is commonly used to avoid side effects for some & the delay should not alter efficacy. So, I'm going to take advantage of the delay of even my milder side effects & try to work on my car tomorrow.

I have a classic car that I need to sell. It's been sitting for about 6 years in a parking garage where I have a space. I am my father's daughter in this regard. His children tend to collect extra car projects like he did. My brother has his 1964 Pontiac Bonneville that my other brother fully restored in 2009. I have my 280ZX anniversary model. It's time to get it running & sell it.

I am an old hand at reclaiming cars that have been sitting for long periods. First, I need to replace the 30 year old tires though. I've enlisted help to jack it up & take the wheel off to get the tires mounted & balanced & then put them back on so I can drive it & get it smogged. New battery & antifreeze & I may be able to drive it to the carwash & to get fresh gas. Hopefully the gas treatment I put in it years ago has helped preserve it. Fingers crossed. I hope I don't need to drain the gas. I can't get it towed to have it checked out & get minor repairs until I have current registration. Well I have no shortage of projects.

We have plans to meet friends from LA in the City on Saturday night. We shall see whether I'm up to the walk to BART or whether it's Lyft. I'm consistently walking a mile or more a day. My appetite and energy continue to improve so we will see.

Love & God's peace go out to you,
Lina

July 14, 2024 ☺ Wishing she were in Dixie ☺ Lina:

God's perfect timing. I have my next infusion on Wednesday, so blood tests again on Monday. This means I should be getting another CA 125 reading even though I had one last week, expecting to get the infusion last Thursday. The timing of future infusions also will shift by a week. So, I will have time to get past any side effects & should be feeling good enough to go to my friend's wedding in Alabama at the beginning of August.

Rand's birthday is August 2 & it is not really his first choice to be in Alabama surrounded by Republicans. Sill, he's agreed to go. I think it will be good for us to be with good people who hold different views.

My friend was my drummer on the road & has been a professional musician since he returned home at the end of those years of perpetual travel. We have great road stories & I enjoy many good experiences in Alabama back when we would stop in with his family on the way to gigs in the area. He is now a widower who is marrying a woman he met in church who is 57 and has never been married. They are both over the moon to have found their love. It is such a joy.

I made progress toward reviving my 280ZX yesterday. I now have new tires all around. The old ones were 30 years old, barely worn but unsafe to drive on. I could plant corn on the dirt than is on it after several years of sitting in a parking garage. I now can drive it to get a smog check, assuming I can locate the key for the steering wheel lock. Otherwise, I guess I can use a hack saw on it.

It took the whole day yesterday to take the wheels in for new tires, refill or check fluids & install a battery. Great progress. Today I'm pooped & I did not do the heavy lifting. Yohanas did it. He is an angel from Ethiopia & a neighbor. After all that, we had dinner with friends from LA. That was some good energy for one day.

Next week we will be dog sitting for our neighbor. It will be nice to enjoy the enthusiasm & love of a dog. Life is good.

I pray that you all are feeling God's peace in these difficult times of turmoil. There is beauty all around us.

Lina

July 20, 2024 ☾ *Dog days of summer* ☾ Lina:

Slow progress.

I had my infusion on Wednesday as scheduled. I'm in the tired patch, but I'm feeling good. I do think this treatment is helping. My next infusion is August 7, with labs after we get back from Alabama. My CA125 was up a bit on Monday.

We have been enjoying dog sitting for our neighbor. Conor has abandonment issues, so we don't dare to leave him alone. He has responded well to squeaky ball therapy & sticks to Rand like glue. Oh those adoring eyes.

Despite my fatigue, I am making some progress on projects which

Not really his first choice...

Yeah, about that. I took a poor impression from my first visit to the South in 1983. The experience of being run off the road and into a drainage ditch by a couple o' whoopin' and hollerin' good ol' boys in a pickup as I trudged along a country road had something to do with this, as did being seated and then ignored for an hour in a Georgia coffee shop because I'd spoken to the staff in "Yankee" English.

So OK, let bygones be bygones. Still, I was not keen to accompany Lina to the wedding of a former inamorato from her years as an itinerant musician. I'd met the guy and his former wife – she died a few years later – and liked them both, but had never met him on his home ground. The fact that his bride-to-be was a Republican officeholder, and that she had been a Trump-pledged delegate to July's GOP convention that month...well, my auditors and only friends, you can see how this would have made me feel not merely like a fish out of water, but a fish on the grill.

But I went, and even though, as likely the only atheist Democrat at a 400-guest wedding reception, I found my conversational gambits circumscribed, I refrained from occasioning any "coastal elite" offense, and I'm grateful to have been with Lina on what was to prove the last untroubled weekend of her life.



An OK dog, I suppose, but not a patch on the incomparable Ravi.

abound. We replaced our oven because the other quit working. We did well with the toaster oven for two weeks while waiting for it.

I got the steering wheel lock cut off my Z today & though I would try to start it up. But, the clutch pedal went to the floor. So something unknown wrong there, anything from a spring to the pressure plate. Thank goodness for Yohanas. He likes having the extra work & I am grateful.

I have been getting good sleep & eating 3 meals, maintaining my 101-102 weight category. I eat well but need to push some more high calorie snacks without the sugar focus.

We have been nice & cool a the heat wave continues inland. We open the windows in the evening & the cool breeze flows through. Can't beat Oakland weather.

I trust that you are staying cool & enjoying your summer. Soon it will be fall.

Love & peace to you,

Lina

2024 (II): ...*then suddenly*

LINA ENJOYED HER TIME IN ALABAMA. After piloting our rental car from Nashville, the closest airport to Huntsville, we spent most of our time there in our air-conditioned hotel room, because the heat and humidity of a Confederate summer was kind of daunting for a couple of coastal elites. Lina, a bit peaked from the ordeal of air travel, was actually to spend most of our holiday resting in bed. I ventured out occasionally on foot – although ours was not a particularly walkable precinct – to score us some takeout grub.

We set forth on the eve of the ceremony to a “rehearsal barbecue,” held indoors (and also air-conditioned!) at a church-adjacent facility. Everyone was gracious, and I was presented with a cake – for it was my seventy-second birthday that weekend – which, to our embarrassment, we had no means of storing or transporting, and were obliged to leave behind.

At the reception, cautioned by Lina not to trespass against local custom and opinion, I confined my remarks to the weather: “Gosh, sure is hotter/humid here than it is where I’m from. Did you know that August in San Francisco is frequently cool and foggy?” – and so forth.

The newlyweds departed for their honeymoon. Lina and I spent the day prior to our scheduled departure looking around her old haunts, for in the eighties she’d spent much time with her then-boyfriend Bryan in Greater Huntsville. Huntsville, I might observe, was the only big city in the state that the Orange Man did not carry in 2020.

We flew back on Sunday, an all-day sort of thing that didn’t find us tumbling into bed until almost midnight. Still, Lina had us up by mid-morning – *schnell, schnell!* – because there were errands to be run, and because she was due for her scheduled “blood draw” at Kaiser

before noon. Therein hangs a tale. Lina dispatched me into our favorite locally-owned grocer on Piedmont Avenue. She was craving a root beer float (the root beer and the ice cream had of course to be free of corn syrup). I returned with the ingredients; she never, in the event, had the float.

As I approached the car, she was on her phone. Kaiser had called, and the message was (I summarize/paraphrase) “We just looked at your lab results and your creatinine numbers are *through the roof!* Your kidneys are failing! Hie thee to the fucking emergency room *right now!*”

Reader, we did, although we stopped first at The Crumbling Manse™ to drop off some perishables and pick up some supplies. Lina was to spend the next fortnight confined to Kaiser as the doctors there puzzled/debated over the cause of her apparent kidney failure. Their first take was that her cancer had extended its remit to the kidneys. Dr. H, to her eternal credit, vigorously dissented. What everyone agreed upon, unfortunately, was that as long as the kidneys remained *hors de combat*, no further treatment of cancer could be essayed, hence Lina’s entry on 9 August “I do not expect to be here much longer.”

She was shortly offered the option of a “nephrostomy bag,” an external vessel in which urine the kidneys could no longer handle might be drained. She resisted this until a patient physician explained that her alternative would be to spend the next weekend in a refrigerated drawer. This sort of thing, as Dr. Johnson once said, “concentrates [the] mind wonderfully,” and she reluctantly consented. It affronted her dignity to be equipped with this appliance, and she hoped to the end of her life, which was closer than either of us then imagined, that she would eventually be freed from the encumbrance.

August 6, 2024 ☾ Unexpected setback ☾ Lina:

Long time & lots going on.

We got back from Alabama Sunday at around midnight. Had a lovely time at the wedding.

I got my labs done on Monday. My oncologist called before I got the results & told me to go to the ER & check in. I've been in the hospital since yesterday afternoon & am expected to be here, "at least until the weekend" while we decide what to do about my kidneys. My creatinine levels went from solid normal to bad, 10 fold increase in 3 weeks. They suspect the antibiotics are to blame & hope the kidneys will recover.

I'm feeling pretty pooped, but better since yesterday. I think I'm looking at a stent for my left kidney, but the right one is swollen & not working very well, for the first time. I will learn more over the next couple of days as we see whether my creatinine comes down. (PS: stent in the left kidney set for tomorrow w/ diagnostic dye injections to determine whether to put one on the right too.)

Just two days ago, we were all dressed up & enjoying the wedding. Glad we we made there. I had no symptoms but fatigue & that's been pretty standard lately.

I had to cancel my infusion tomorrow while they sort out the kidney thing. However, the ENHERTU has been effective & my CA 125 is down from 780 to 362.

Please keep me in your thoughts. Pray for me, my kidneys & doctors.

Love to you, Lina

August 9, 2024 ☾ Discouraged ☾ Lina:

Dear loved ones, this is a difficult post. I'm sorry to share this sad news. I love you all so very much.

I must say directly that I do not expect to be here much longer. My kidneys are failing fairly quickly. This is sudden. Three weeks ago my kidneys were filtering and producing normal creatinine levels of .71. On Monday, August, the day after we returned from Alabama from ere since my friend's wedding, I had my usual blood tests before my expected ENHERTU infusion scheduled for Wednesday.



With two of the 400+ guests at the reception dinner.



Outside the Huntsville Botanical Garden, in appalling heat.

My cancer reading, CA125 was down, but my creatinine level was up to 7.1, a life threatening level My oncologist told me to check into the ER ASAP I have been here since. I've had a number of tests and procedures. They have no explanation for why this has happened or how to reverse this increasing creatinine level.

Now, my kidneys are not filtering the creatinine and other toxins & electrolytes. They cannot figure out why. My right kidney is swollen to double its normal size. The left side had been partially blocked since November 2022, handling 35% of the work & I had .71 since that, center normal.

I expect to go home on hospice in a few days after another test or two. I should be home about Monday. Please do not try to visit me at the hospital I will be home soon.

Sorry to share this news. I love you.

In Christ, Love to you & thank you for your prayers.

Lina

August 10, 2024 ❧ *Weighing options* ❧ Lina:

Still here with an option. I'm waiting on a nephrostomy that they think might help. That's expected within twenty four hours. Love you. Don't know more.

Love you.

August 13, 2024 ❧ *Service advisory* ❧ Rand:

Lina is considerably more herself than she'd been in the aftermath of the "procedure" on Sunday and the day following. As might be imagined, confinement to her hospital room gets old, particularly given that, at this point, the sentence appears indeterminate. Job one remains to kickstart the kidneys, because absent that restored functionality, therapy for the underlying condition cannot be resumed. We await developments. Lina appreciates the thoughts and prayers, but responses to well-wishes conveyed via email or texts draw upon her very limited reserves of energy, and also cause her hi-tech watch to vibrate "haptically," and frequently interrupt her slumber—a balm that takes her away from contemplation of her condition—so please regard your positive vibes as "given" and try not to disturb her repose. Thanks.

August 15, 2024 ❧ *No news is no news* ❧ Rand:

There are no significant new developments to report. Lina is now in her third room. It's less cramped and the view is better, although owing to the placement of the bed this is something that visitors are better positioned than the patient to appreciate. Most significantly, and unlike her first two cells, the room is not beset and shaken by the loud clanking and thumping sounds of unknown origin several times an hour ("We think it's a construction defect," volunteered one nurse. Really? In a ten year-old hospital, and no one has thought to remedy this?).

Her creatinine levels continue to decline, but nothing like as swiftly as everyone would like. The cause of the condition remains a mystery. Lina is running a slight fever, and the doctors have her on supplemental oxygen because the O₂ blood levels, as measured by one of those thingies that attaches to the index finger, have been suboptimal. "I get loopy when that happens," she reports. "Can't remember words or names."

Over the two years since her initial diagnosis, and particularly over the course of dozens of dreary drives back and forth along I-5 between here and the Southland, we have listened to many an audiobook, and have accumulated a vast inventory of these. To relieve the stupefying boredom of her confinement we are presently playing each afternoon a few chapters of the late Paul Auster's novel *The Book of Illusions*, in which a bereaved scholar investigates the fate of a minor silent film star who, presumed dead since his disappearance early in 1929, may actually have gone on to pursue a very private career as an auteur into the 1980s. We're both enjoying it.

(I admired Auster, and have enjoyed most of his novels beginning with 1989's *Moon Palace*, but his books are best taken at intervals rather than on a binge: themes and situations recur; the note of melodrama is sometimes off-puttingly loud; coincidences are relied upon unduly to propel his plots forward. But for sheer storytelling horsepower, he's up there, and in general a more than competent prose stylist.)

“Likely my last post”

Recall that at this point the staff at Kaiser, with the honorable exception of he oncologist, was telling us that the cancer had now spread to Lina’s kidneys, and that this was in effect a death sentence, since absent functioning kidneys no further cancer treatment could be essayed. We were both left with the impression that she was unlikely to see the end of the month, hence the uncharacteristic note of resignation in her post of August 17.

She would in fact hang on for another ten weeks following the “likely last post,” and even recover a trace of her former determination to beat the odds, although it seemed clear to her loved ones, if not to herself, that she was inexorably fading as the season wore on.

We were to have two spells of home hospice care. Interestingly, while there may be plenty of uncertainty in medicine, it apparently does not extend to the quantum level, so that while light may exist simultaneously as a wave and as a particle, a sick person can either be a patient, i.e., receiving treatment, or a hospice client, with services but no chemo, but not both at once. We were to go back and forth a couple of times before the end.

August 17, 2024 ❧ *Premature farewell* ❧ Lina:

I love you. This likely is my last post. It’s hard to know how to say goodbye. I guess there is no way other than to pray for you like you have & do for me, that you find comfort & peace in the shelter of God’s loving grace. Judy shared Psalm 91 with me, which says it.

There is cancer in my left kidney & my kidneys are not expected to recover sufficiently to allow cancer treatment. I expect to be discharged to hospice by Monday, at home. Please pray for Rand & limit contacts to text, Caring-Bridge & written forms unless cleared with him. My love pours out to you.

In Christ,
Lina

August 20, 2024 ❧ *Sprung from the hospital* ❧ Rand:

Lina was discharged from the hospital yesterday following a fortnight as Kaiser’s guest. She was borne upstairs to The Crumbling Manse™ by two burly paramedics carrying aloft the medical equivalent of a sedan chair (they politely declined my offered gratuity) and settled with relief into the familiar connubial bed. She is comfortable but weary and a bit frail from so prolonged a period off her feet: we are hoping in the coming days to get her walking around the house from bedroom to dining room and back to get her legs accustomed to use.

She dined last night on baked salmon, zucchini and sourdough bread with olive oil & vinegar, and pronounced this a welcome change from hospital cuisine: not to put the knock on Kaiser’s chefs, but the joint ain’t likely to make the Guide Michelin any time soon.

Our patient’s big sister and her husband, after driving down from Washington, should arrive before noon, and will be staying this evening in our comfy garret. We are also expecting a visit from the hospice team, which we expect will be informative. We are given to understand that they will be calling here every day for the duration.

Thanks to all for the good wishes. I’ve had to turn away a couple of requests for telephone calls, because Lina doesn’t feel up to these just now, but if, as we hope, she recovers a measure of energy this may change, and I’ll let people know.

August 24, 2024 ☞ *Notes from home* ☞ Rand:

It's been Old Home Week here at the old home, AKA the Harrison Street Hostel for Wayward Kinfolk, commencing with the Godwins, Lina's sister and brother-in-law (one of nature's gentlemen) dropping by on Tuesday for a few hours, with longtime friend "JL" arriving the following day. Brother David is up from Ventura County to visit and to lend some critical assistance with automotive issues, and his son Jonathan has shown up from his nearby Oakland digs. All this has been gratifying, if a tad tiring, for our patient, although the spells of "girl talk" with JL appear to have a transient revivifying effect.

Thursday evening we had the medical apparatus equivalent of a "wardrobe malfunction," requiring a call to the good people at Continuum. A nurse was promptly dispatched here to apply temporary remedial measures, and yesterday morning we betook ourselves to Kaiser, which, in an hourlong "procedure," rejiggered the plumbing interface. When Lina was retrieved she was ravenous, so the three of us (JL having been of critical assistance moving our invalid in and out of the hospital) shared an early supper at an Afghan restaurant on College Avenue. Back home, as the twilight deepened and the womenfolk continued their colloquies at the rear of the house, David and I, at loose ends, screened the 1985 Scorsese flick *After Hours*, featuring young Griffin Dunne as an office drone who leaves his Manhattan apartment one evening in search of romance but endures instead the Date from Hell. The women joined us about half an hour in, and were amused.

So far, Lina seems (allowing for a fairly substantial *mutatis mutandis*) reasonably comfortable, and tries to keep herself active, still gratified at being tethered to a bed no longer. We will be heading back for her "labs" early next week so that the doctors can take the measure of whatever dodgy metabolic byproducts might be cluttering her bloodstream since the last time they looked. I'll try to post developments here every few days, even if they're only of the "no news is good news" variety.

I've passed on the thoughts, prayers, vibes &c by name as these arrive via sundry channels, and she wants me to convey in turn to all how much these are appreciated.



Lina's cherished Fender Telecaster from her years as an itinerant musician fronting a rock "cover band" all around the Lower 48. She bequeathed this to the younger of her sister's daughters, and the Godwins kindly arranged for its delivery to her in Pittsburgh.

Running interference

I felt obliged during this period to soft-pedal in my own posts details that might have triggered a cascade of concerned texts, emails, calls that I don't think Lina could have summoned up the strength to endure, and I routinely turned away, at her request, more than a few earnest applications for visits. She lacked the strength for these; was reluctant as well, I'm inclined to think, to be seen or remembered in her debility. I have read that when John Updike was dying in 2008 his second wife made it difficult for her predecessor in that role and for the author's four adult children to see him. Learning of this I was disposed to be censorious, but I recognize now that there might have been other considerations I did not take into account at the time.

August 24, 2024 ☞ *Alone Again (Naturally)* ☞ Rand:

Yesterday I put brother David on the train; predawn today I saw "JL" off to her nearly-redeye flight back to San Diego. David did valuable work to get Lina's "collectible" car up and running; JL was an enormous help to us both, and we wish she could have remained longer. A hospice nurse checked in here a few hours later this morning.

After that we ran a hunka-hunka errands today: to Kaiser for her scheduled blood draw (results from the one three weeks ago today were our first notice that the patient was now slotted into the chute); a stop for some takeout Burmese lunch; a confab at the bank to close down L's business account. We have also been sorting out sundry other pecuniary and bureaucratic details. Dying in today's environment involves a lot more paperwork, or shuttling back and forth of electrons, than was the case a century/half-century ago. There have been forms to be completed, passwords divulged, accounts consolidated, distributions calculated. "I always supposed that we'd have months to attend to this stuff," I sighed at one point. "We did," she responded, with pardonable dryness.

Lina's sleeping now. She does that a lot lately.

Developments as they unfold. Thanks to all for your patience and your forbearance—for I know that many of you are inclined to contact our patient directly; and the "gatekeeper" role I am obliged to assume is not one that sits comfortably with me—and be assured that your good wishes are conveyed, and gratefully received.

2024 (III): *eclipsed*

HER INCIPIENT KIDNEY FAILURE, for which no firm explanation was ever vouchsafed us – although we may reasonably assume that it was some ancillary component of the disease – proved a harbinger of Lina’s final decline. The patient whom Kaiser sprang from fifteen days’ confinement in mid-August was scarcely recognizable as the woman who had so enjoyed the company of her old friends at the Huntsville wedding. A fortnight in bed induced a level of debility from which she was never to come back.

At the end of August we were still in “hospice” mode – a pause here to give a shout-out to “Asian Home Health Care” and “Continuum,” both of which outfits were to provide invaluable care and support over the next two months. Although Lina remained unhappy with the indignity of a “nephrostomy bag,” she welcomed the diminishing levels of creatinine in her blood, hoping – correctly, as it turned out – that this might presage a return to levels of nephritic functionality sufficient to justify a resumption of anticancer therapy. And so it came to be, and so her ENHERTU infusions were resumed (with, we thought, a discernible want of enthusiasm on the part of Dr. H) in early September.

As was her wont, Lina inclined to put the best construction on this reprieve, and why not? “Doom and gloom” was never, to her way of thinking, a congenial stance. Where hope was in prospect she could see no reason for not working it into her worldview, hence “answered prayers” and “gratitude.” I am grateful myself, to whom it may concern, that this thinking, rather than despair, informed the latter weeks of her life, because these were now upon us.

The trend in September seemed largely positive until the end of the month, when a potentially life-threatening blood clot, probably another cancer-related symptom, showed up in her leg: back to the ER. That crisis surmounted, we returned home in October.

At that time we both imagined, I think, that we had settled upon a kind of plateau, at a lower altitude, to be sure, than we might have preferred, but it seemed reasonable to suppose that we might have in prospect the twenty-ninth anniversary at year's end of our first romantic New Year's Eve. Certainly we took for granted that we'd catch the election returns together come the first Tuesday in November. We did not, of course, and I take it a minor mercy that Lina did not live to endure the outcome. I'm happy to report that she completed, and I mailed, her ballot in advance of her death.

The end, when it came near the end of October, was to arrive with appalling, unexpected swiftness and ferocity.

September 1, 2024 ☸ *Dogless days of summer* ☸ Rand:

About forty-eight hours either side of Labor Day would ordinarily find us, as it has these twenty years past, strolling through the piney woods up by Redacted Creek in the Sierra foothills, where our good friend G maintains a rustic vacation cabin—I call it her “dacha”—splashing about in the nearby American River, grilling up flesh, fish, fowl, and catching up on back issues of the NYRB, with which the cabin is stocked in abundance. These excursions were also a treat for the dogs as they’d go traipsing along the forest trails, snuffling the expanded spectrum of smells (“Jeepers! Is that really *bear scat*?”) laid out for their delectation, to all appearances a welcome and exotic change from the urban message boards (“Reply all”) of their normal Oakland routes. Even in his final decline last year poor Ravi, at T minus six weeks, clearly enjoyed himself. We have, obviously, been compelled by circumstances to break with tradition this year. Well, no place like home.

Lina seems to be stable as we enter the new month—I don’t need to tell the regulars here that it was touch-and-go for a while in August—appearing to have reached a kind a plateau, albeit one at a noticeably lower altitude than the one on which we dwelt in July. Her creatinine levels, while still outside the “normal” range, are down about two-thirds from the dangerous numbers that had us sprinting to the ER four weeks ago (has it been only that long? It feels like an eternity), suggesting that the kidneys are laboring under less strain. Mornings remain a little tough. The hospice folks have been pretty good on their scheduled visits, and arrived on short notice on the one occasion it was deemed advisable to summon them after hours.

She has become pickier with her audiobooks fare, turning down after samples J.G. Ferrell’s novel *Troubles* (too tense) and P.G. Wodehouse’s “Mulliner” stories (too frothy), but seems to have found the sweet spot with *Crazy Salad*, Nora Ephron’s collection of magazine pieces from the seventies. She is also looking forward to starting the fourth season of *Slow Horses* in a few days, and to the Vice President kicking her adversary’s nuts up to the vicinity of his tonsils a week from Tuesday, FSM willing.

Thanks to all for your continued best wishes.

Back on the chemo train

Although the cause(s) of Lina's incipient kidney failure still had her nephrologists scratching their heads, the balky organs had finally been kickstarted into something approaching functionality, and Dr. H consented (a tad grudgingly, we both thought) to a resumption of the ENHERTU infusions. As mentioned a few pages back, this involved the suspension of the home hospice services formerly provided, but while these had been useful, Lina was happy to, as she put it, swap anxiety for gratitude. She had for a time thought not to see September, and to have the cancer countermeasures resumed seemed to her in the light of a reprieve, and this mild optimism, the sense of "answered prayers," was to sustain her for six weeks more, up to the eve of her steep terminal decline.

September 7, 2024 ☞ *Hope on the horizon* ☞ Lina:

Hope on the horizon. My kidneys have rallied to the point that my oncologist has agreed to resume ENHERTU chemotherapy, although at a lightened dose. A miracle in itself. So, Monday I'm scheduled to have an infusion.

I've been feeling pretty tired mostly. Hopefully the cancer treatment will help with that.

Rand has been his amazing self, attending to my needs and being considerate with my frustrations. I had to have the nephrostomy bag replaced for a third time as it developed another intense leak from the insertion point. They used a bigger tube in hopes it will remain secure.

Thank you for your continuing prayers & good wishes.

Love, Lina

September 11, 2024 ☞ *Answered prayers* ☞ Lina:

Hope, answered prayer & gratitude. These have filled my recent days. I am blessed that I enjoy the gratitude rather than suffering anxiety.

I had my infusion on Monday & I've been sleeping a lot since then. My next infusion is scheduled for September 21, provided my labs continue to reflect my improved kidney function.

I have felt a bit stronger since Monday & my appetite has improved. I was down to 95 pounds, dressed, on Monday. So, now I'm hoping to gain again.

Rand helped me shower today, which is quite an undertaking now. I got a referral for temporary home health support of a visiting nurse from the palliative care team at Kaiser. But palliative care does not provide any in home service. So, since I had to withdraw from hospice to receive infusions, we've been on our own. We will see whether home health will fill any of the gaps. But today, I feel so refreshed, clean body, trimmed nails, etc.

I have spent most of the days resting in the dining room which has a nice view of outside.

Thank you again for your prayers, love & encouragement.

Love, Lina

September 22, 2024 ☞ *The kidneys rally* ☞ Lina:

Waiting. Sorry for the long gap. There is nothing to report until next week-end after my labs, but the kidneys seem to be continuing their rally. I am scheduled to have my infusion on October 1.

I will miss Bill Bryant's smile & loving attitude. He was so happy playing the drums. Prayers for his wife & all those who are missing him But he is in the arms of the lord now.

This week's accomplishment was, with the help of our friend Robert, to get the Z smogged. It passed. Yay. I have to get current registration now which is likely a day at the DMV. But finally I'm ready. That's the news

Thank you for your love & prayers,

Lina

September 29, 2024 ☞ *Now what?* ☞ Lina:

Blood clot left leg. Back in the hospital since Sat. They have me on Eliquis to stop further clotting or traveling of the large clot. I expect to be discharged home Tuesday. They say the clot will dissipate.

I'm pretty exhausted. I'm scheduled for my infusion Tuesday. My creatinine is down to 1.67. On track for chemo. That's it for now.

Love to you,

Lina

October 1, 2024 ☞ *Jiggety-jig* ☞ Rand:

Lina is home again, having been released in time for her scheduled chemotherapy a block away. Among the prescriptions we took back with us was an amber cylinder of (rather dear) blood thinner, to be taken twice daily, given to us with the admonition "never, *never* miss a scheduled dose!" I received a like caution eight years ago following Kaiser's reaming out of my cardiac plumbing, conveying the sense that should I disregard orders a clot the size of a Concord grape would spontaneously appear beneath my sternum and blow out the works, leaving me looking something like the end of John Hurt's dinner scene in *Alien*. I took it seriously, and so will Lina. She is presently watching the veep debate—I do not subject myself to these things, although I'm prepared to catch the



Last Supper – and last photo: We always tried to make a point of dining out on our wedding anniversary, and on Tuesday 9/24 we were joined by our chum Robert at “The Wolf” on Piedmont Avenue. In the event, Lina could not muster much of an appetite.

One damn thing after another

Lina's limbs had grown almost skeletal by this point, so we were nonplussed when one leg assumed, almost overnight, something like its former graceful proportions. This proved to be edema, consequence of a blood clot, so it was off to the ER for another few days. "We'd ordinarily treat it with a blood thinner," the doctors advised us, "but this clot is quite extensive." After further consideration they went with the medicine in lieu of vascular surgery, the latter course being deemed as likely to dislodge bits of clot as to remove it cleanly, one potential complication being a pulmonary embolism, which struck everyone as a suboptimal outcome.

Gradually, then suddenly

Given the dire prognosis offered to us at the onset in 2022, that she probably wouldn't long survive the year, and given the intervals of optimism, including two consecutive first quarters, we had both of us come to hope, and even to a certain extent believe, that as one course of treatment gradually lost its mojo there would always be another forthcoming from the oncologists' bottomless bag of tricks. The belief took hold that we might somehow push back indefinitely. It was not to be.

On the last full weekend of her life Lina was in good spirits. She had – she thought – arranged for a hairdresser appointment in Berkeley that Saturday, but owing to some confusion her regular stylist wasn't in. This abortive trip was to be the last time she would ever set foot outdoors. On Sunday we had a friend over for pizza, and introduced him to the streaming series *Slow Horses*.

Monday morning she woke up essentially paralyzed, unable to stand or even turn over in bed unassisted. Later the same day we received the latest “cancer number,” far, far higher than anything measured in the past. We both understood that the end was upon us. There followed a harrowing final week, the details of which do not lend themselves to a “sidebar.” These are addressed in the concluding chapter.

highlight reels—and nibbling on same tasty sushi from the Food Hole down the street.

October 2, 2024 ☞ *“All is good”* ☞ **Lina:**

Answered prayer. I had my infusion yesterday & returned home. So nice. I'm feeling somewhat stronger today, got my coffee & biscotti.

I have my right side kidney stent removed tomorrow. My left leg seems somewhat less swollen. I'm eating fine & my weight is up to 103. So all is good.

Love to you,
Lina

October 6, 2024 ☞ *Brief bulletin* ☞ **Lina:**

Had an ECG yesterday. Next infusion scheduled 9/21 w/ blood tests 3 days before. No news but gratitude for God's grace & Rand. Looking forward to Zoom Church. Beautiful day yesterday. We're not too hot.

October 19, 2024 ☞ *“I don't know the measure yet”* ☞ **Lina:**

Sorry for the gap. No updates to share & fatigue.

My creatinine is down again, 1.38. Go kidneys. Answered prayer. So my infusion is on track for Monday assuming my oncologist decides it's working bc my CA125 improved. I don't know the measure yet.

More Monday.

Love you,
Lina

October 21, 2024 ☞ *Her last entry* ☞ **Lina:**

Did not make it to infusion today. Couldn't walk. CA 125, 4000 +

October 27, 2024 ☞ *The end* ☞ **Rand:**

“The undiscovered country from whose bourn/No traveler returns.”

On Sunday evening, not quite twenty-eight months after her disease announced itself with a harsh fanfare, Lina Foltz left this life on a gentle diminuendo, a peaceful finish following a dramatic weeklong terminal de-

cline. As it became clear that the end was approaching, a few friends and family members gathered. She lost consciousness early in the afternoon and died—the transition was barely perceptible—at 6:30.

This isn't the place, and just at the moment I haven't the grit for, a detailed tribute. There will be time for that anon, and likely a memorial event later in the year at CAPC, but I know that her friends who have been cheering her on here on the Bridge of Care, would want, if scarcely welcome, the news of her passing. She endured, speaking of grit, with enormous fortitude, and contrived, up until this was no longer possible, to wring a measure of happiness from each day granted to her. "May that be truly said of us, and all of us!"

2024 (IV): ...*only shorter*

WE HAD NOT EXPECTED THIS. The preceding weekend, Lina's condition had seemed no worse than usual. She was up and about. A few days earlier she had reported to our dentist for her quarterly teeth cleaning; on Saturday she had me drive her into Berkeley's "Elmwood District" to have her hair done. Lina was always conscientious in matters of grooming and presentation.

The salon told Lina that they had no record of an appointment, and that her regular hairdresser was not even in that day. "Computer screwup," she growled. I was inclined to suppose that the confusion had originated on the other end of the schedule, but tactfully made no observation to this effect. We drove home, and I guided her up the steep walkway to the back door. Neither of us imagined that she would never step outdoors again.

We entertained an evening guest (pizza from Berkeley's wonderful "Cheese Board," hurrah!) and reprised for him an episode of *Slow Horses* before retiring: the last "normal" night ever.

In the morning, Lina woke up essentially paralyzed: she could not move her legs; could not so much as turn over in bed unassisted. She had an ENHERTU infusion scheduled at Kaiser that afternoon, and insisted that she *would* make it. I attempted to move her from bed into her wheelchair, but this was like trying to wrangle an 89 pound burlap sack of potatoes. She acknowledged at last that it wasn't going to happen.

Then came the call from Kaiser with the numbers from her last blood draw: the CA-125 had now topped 4000, unprecedentedly high.

Lina was ever optimistic; never delusional. At this she understood at last that she was indeed dying. Hope had sustained her, but with hope withdrawn, life, and particularly life suffused with suffering, lost its savor.

I soft-pedaled this on CaringBridge, because it likely would have upset or affronted a portion of the audience demographic, but once Lina understood that she would endure paralyzed, helpless, incontinent for the remainder of her days, she determined to minimize these with recourse to California's "End of Life Option Act," which permitted her legally to apply for medical intervention to terminate her suffering rather than waiting for cancer to take its dreary course. The fact that California today offers this option owes in no small part to the publicity attending the 2016 out-of-state assisted suicide, and to the subsequent lobbying by her family, of Brittany Maynard, who was obliged to travel to neighboring Oregon in order to die legally on her own terms. Although we had not made the connection at the time, we later learned that Brittany's aunt was a long-time friend whom we'd both known since high school.

Once she'd processed the stratospheric CA-125 numbers, and having made her decision on Tuesday to check out, she informed the hospice workers of her intent. To her astonishment and dismay, she was advised that the paperwork would consume at least three weeks. "I can't *take* this for three more weeks," she moaned (and for my part I am certain that she could never have lasted that long).

At this point a kind "social worker" contracted to the hospice outfit vouchsafed some invaluable information: those "three weeks" only obtained if we went through Kaiser and its cumbersome procedures. If we chose, we might apply to a freelancer who could cut through the bureaucratic obstacles in far less time, sparing the patient much suffering. And so we were put in touch with Dr. X – I conceal his identity lest our current deranged and unpredictable polity suddenly

decree his service again a criminal act – who consented to conduct what was to amount to the obsequies. His fee was, compared to what Kaiser might have asked, startlingly steep, but the timetable on offer was a pearl of great price: “Pay him anything,” Lina whispered. “*Anything!*” The workman is worthy of his hire.

I can’t speak highly enough of Dr. X, by the way. If I ever have to star in an assisted suicide myself, I want him to officiate. As one of the persons present that Sunday asked, “Does he take reservations?”

Dr. X arrived on Wednesday to consult. California law quite reasonably requires that a candidate for “End of Life Option Act” procedures should first be deemed competent to make the decision, and also not subject to pressure from others. Lina went on to make a lucid case for her choice to Dr. X and to a second physician, per statutory requirement, by telephone.

With the arrangements in train, I was charged with traveling to Pacifica, about twenty-five miles away, this being the location of the only “compounding pharmacy” that was prepared to make up the rather pricey powdered formula (which even the literature described as the “lethal cocktail”). This establishment proved to have the unlikely handle “Feelgood Pharmacy.” Yeah, right. My chum Rob Williams very, very kindly volunteered to chauffeur me there and back.

The end had been scheduled for Monday, but taking into account Lina’s distress, Dr. X rearranged his schedule so that, returning from Los Angeles that morning, he flew directly here on Sunday in advance of a late shift, having switched with another doctor at a local hospital. He was to have a twenty-hour day.

All through her last week we had hospice personnel shuttling in and out attending to Lina’s needs, for which we were both grateful, but the procedures tired her. Family and friends were also coming through, and while she was in the main gracious, it seemed clear

that these farewells were costing an effort. She spent much of her free time dozing, and during the intervals of wakefulness seemed increasingly disengaged. There was much I wish we two could have spent time talking about, but whenever I ventured upon such conversational salients she seemed disposed wearily to wave these away. I can only guess, but it may be that she was preoccupied in her last days with the serious business of dying, and could not spare many of her dwindling hours for the rest of us. I don't mean to suggest a cognitive deficit – she was capable of rising to full alertness when called upon – but there was a certain sense at the end that her personality, everything that had made her so distinctively “Lina,” was being layer by layer planed away along with her physical substance.

She had repeatedly expressed her wish to “go out like my dog did,” by which she meant outdoors, under blue skies, as Ravi had a year earlier, and to this end on Saturday our dear friends Paula and Mary toiled all day to make the Back Forty presentable for the occasion. On Sunday, as we awaited the arrival of Dr. X, Greg and I sought to coax her into her wheelchair, in which we proposed, awkwardly, to carry her outdoors. We were nonplussed when she resisted this, having suddenly and unexpectedly changed her mind (very “on-brand,” I must say, for the willful and contrarian Ms. Foltz). “Why are you bothering me?” she demanded. “Just let me die in bed.”

Which she went on to do. Friends and family assembled on the appointed day – her brother David and David's son Jonathan; friends Mary and Rob; my siblings Greg and Jeanne – to help us through the death (I was going to write “transition,” but Lina was never one for delicate circumlocutions).

Dr. X arrived on schedule. He requested a few minutes alone with his patient before I was invited back into the sickroom. The bed was elevated. I mixed the powdered “lethal cocktail” with apple juice. We'd been warned that the taste would be vile, and might even

induce a burning sensation, and so had a raspberry sorbet at ready so that the aftertaste might not pursue Lina into the afterlife. She gave us a rueful smile, and quaffed the fluid down, taking the sorbet chaser immediately after. She then took my hand and closed her eyes for the last time.

The “cocktail” included among its ingredients a gigantic dose of morphine, and from what I have read of these things – and I fervently hope this is true – Lina’s last fleeting moments of consciousness would have been informed with a kind of ecstasy, with her endorphin receptors cranked wide open and playing the “Ode to Joy” at top volume as choirs of angels sang her to her rest. Pray God, if God there be, that this was the case.

She closed her eyes at about a quarter to one. The “cocktail” typically carries away the consumer within a couple of hours, but Lina was having none of it. “She has a strong heart,” Dr. X acknowledged. He remained with us until, late into the afternoon, he was obliged to report to the hospital shift he’d agreed to undertake to free up his attendance with us. I kept my station beside her, my siblings remaining discreetly a couple of rooms away, for the next couple of hours. The end, when it arrived, was barely perceptible. Lina’s breath had become labored from time to time as the coma took hold of her, but gradually became ever fainter. I checked her pulse at intervals, but the end was unmistakable as the color drained, utterly, from her face. It was about 6:30, and she was gone “You always said there was no one like me, and now there won’t be.” I’ll spare us all the dreary details that obtained between here and the mortuary. Heaven help me, but I haven’t the heart to add further to this melancholy account.

“may it please the court”

Remembering Lina J. Foltz: A Champion for Children’s Rights

By Jean Murrell Adams, Esq.

MANY KNEW LINA FOR HER SHARP WIT, her love of music, and her generous spirit. But for nearly thirty years, Lina dedicated her professional life to something truly extraordinary: fighting for the rights of children with disabilities. Her legal career was more than a profession—it was a calling that transformed thousands of lives and reshaped educational law across multiple states.

Advocating for Those Who Needed It Most

Lina understood that children with disabilities often face an uphill battle in getting the education and support they deserve. When frustrated parents arrived at her office—sometimes after years of struggling with unresponsive school systems—Lina saw not just another case, but a child whose potential was being overlooked and a family that needed an advocate who would never give up.

Her approach was both strategic and deeply compassionate. She combined sharp legal analysis with genuine empathy, understanding that behind every legal brief was a real child whose future hung in the balance.

Serving Justice from the Bench

Lina served as an Administrative Law Judge for the State of California, where she presided over cases involving students with disabilities and their right to appropriate education. In this role, she became known for thoughtful decisions and creative remedies that truly served children’s best interests.



From behind the Irony Curtain

I'd forgotten, or perhaps had not understood, that Lina ever referred to these young charges as "the kittens" to anyone except me, over morning coffee. It may startle some of her protégés to learn that she took this usage from an anecdote related by Nikita Khrushchev about the elderly Joseph Stalin shaking his head as he looked over his "colleagues" on the Soviet Præsidium, as the Politburo was then known. "You are blind," the tyrant sighed, "like kittens. How will Russia survive after I'm gone?" It is not recorded how some of the ferocious little felines gathered around the table – Lazar Kaganevich, Vyacheslav Molotov, Lavrentiy Beria – felt about this characterization. What's certain is that Lina herself saw to it that under her tutelage the "kittens" entered the field of special education law with eyes wide open and sharpened claws.

Lina's commitment to children's rights can be observed in her decisions. In one memorable case, Lina ordered a school district to provide comprehensive support for a student, including private school tuition, transportation, intensive tutoring, speech and occupational therapy, and even gymnastics classes. This wasn't just about following the law – it was about ensuring that every child received what they needed to succeed, regardless of the cost or complexity.

Landmark Victory: Changing the Law for Millions

Lina's most significant legal triumph came in 2014 with the federal appeals court case *M.M. v. Lafayette School District*. The case involved a student with learning disabilities whose school was conducting regular reading assessments but keeping the results hidden from parents – even when those parents specifically requested testing for special education services.

Lina argued that this secrecy violated parents' fundamental rights to participate meaningfully in their child's education. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals agreed, ruling that school districts must share all testing data with parents upon request.

This landmark decision now protects families across 11 states and territories, including California, Nevada, Arizona, Oregon, and Washington, and has been cited in over 128 subsequent cases. Because of Lina's tenacity and legal expertise, over a million families now have access to crucial information about their children's academic progress—information that can be the key to getting appropriate educational support.

Building the Next Generation of Advocates

Perhaps equally important to her courtroom victories was Lina's role as mentor and teacher. She took great pride in training younger attorneys, whom she affectionately called her "kittens." Her mentorship went far beyond technical legal training—she taught them

how to truly listen to families, how to be strategic yet compassionate advocates, and how to never lose sight of the child at the center of every case.

Lina would shadow new attorneys through their first mediations, carefully review their legal documents, and was always available for consultation on complex cases. Her door was always open, and no question was too basic or too complicated for her patient guidance.

The legal community's response to her passing reflects the profound impact of her mentorship. Some tributes:

"She was a great advocate who represented students tirelessly. She was also a friend who offered wisdom to those of us who needed guidance."

"Lina mentored me for years. She was very generous with her time. She was a fighter, and I'm really going to miss her."

"When we lose warriors like Lina, the loss is immeasurable. May we all strive to continue legacies such as hers."

"I attribute a large part of my special education trial success to her mentoring."

Justice Accessible to All

What set Lina apart was her commitment to serving families regardless of their financial circumstances. She regularly adjusted her fees based on families' ability to pay, believing that every child deserved excellent legal representation, not just those whose parents could afford high-priced attorneys.

From 2015 to 2022, Lina served as Managing Attorney for ADAMS ESQ, a law firm specifically focused on representing children with disabilities from modest-income families throughout California and Nevada. Under her leadership, the firm maintained the highest standards of legal excellence while ensuring that financial barriers never prevented a child from getting needed advocacy.

Professional Recognition and Community Impact

Lina was an active member of professional organizations dedicated to advancing the rights of children with disabilities, including the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates and the California Association for Parent Child Advocacy. Through these organizations, she freely shared her expertise and helped elevate the entire field of special education law.

Her influence extended far beyond her individual cases. The legal precedents she established continue to protect families. The attorneys she trained carry forward her methods and values. The children she represented have grown up with opportunities they might never have had without her advocacy.

A Lasting Legacy

Lina's career exemplified what it means to use professional skills in service of social justice. She understood that the law, at its best, is a tool for protecting the vulnerable and ensuring equal opportunity for all. Every victory she achieved, every precedent she established, and every attorney she mentored contributes to a more just society where children with disabilities can reach their full potential.

Her work reminds us that meaningful change often happens one case at a time, one family at a time, through the dedication of individuals who refuse to accept that "different" means "less than." Lina saw ability where others saw disability, potential where others saw problems, and hope where others saw obstacles.

As we remember Lina J. Foltz, we celebrate not just a brilliant legal mind, but a compassionate advocate whose life's work continues to open doors for children who need champions. Her legacy lives on in the laws she helped shape, the lawyers she inspired, and the thousands of children whose lives are better because she never stopped fighting for what was right.

Jean Murrell Adams founded the law firm of ADAMS ESQ in Los Angeles, California in 2002 after fighting for proper testing, services and education for her child with exceptional needs. In 2010, ADAMS ESQ expanded to Nevada where it continues to represent parents of children with special education needs on a contingency basis. Prior to opening a special education law firm, Ms. Adams established and helmed the litigation department for Dream-Works Pictures and served as Vice President and Assistant General Counsel for Sony Pictures. She is a graduate of Princeton University and the University of Southern California Law Center.

Shortly after Lina's death, ADAMS ESQ renamed its scholarship program for "special needs" students in her honor.

acknowledgments

THIS VOLUME WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN CONCEIVED, and Lina might have gone without a valuable channel in which to share her hopes and anxieties, but for the good people at www.caringbridge.org. I'm grateful that their organization has maintained the site for almost thirty years at no charge, and make a point to throw some coin their way now and then.

The nursing staff at Oakland Kaiser and at the Cedars-Sinai facility in Tarzana were always attentive and considerate to the patient in their care. Lina would have wanted in particular to give a shout-out to DeMariay, a technician hero at the Kaiser labs, for going above and beyond. During the latter weeks of her illness, skilled personnel from Asian Network Pacific Home Care and from Continuum Nursing routinely helped us out, sometimes on short notice.

Tanya Sirkin and Tom Anderson graciously made Tanya's Northridge condominium available to us for the better part of a year as we sought treatment in the Southland. My brother Greg Careaga did yeoman work looking after Lina and Ravi when I could not. Lina's fellow parishioner Marda Stother provided logistical and moral support, particularly during those last months, and the well wishes of the entire CAPC community were the source of joy. Our pals Robert and Rebecca were always available to chauffeur us around at need.

Dear friends Mary Barnsdale, Paula DeCristofaro and Alison Fleck took Lina's garden in hand at critical junctures. I hope someday to make of that a worthy legacy.

Anyone I've neglected to name here or elsewhere, well, that's on me, and chalk it up to distracted bereavement. You never, any of you, lacked for our gratitude.