

Coming to terms with ALS

Living with ALS Doug Russell

I was born and brought up in Steveston, a small fishing village at the mouth of the Fraser River. I married my high school sweetheart, (Dyann), and have two wonderful daughters, and two grandchildren. Both my wife and I were very active, and played many sports throughout our childhood, but slowly migrated to golf and skiing as we entered adulthood.

I was originally trained as an electronics technician, and in 1970 started work in the nuclear physics department, at UBC. After around 2 1/2 years, I realized that I wanted a career that was more physical, outdoors, and exciting. In 1973, I joined the Richmond Fire Department. For 31 years, I made a lot of friends, received a lot of job satisfaction, and had a lot of fun.

In 1980, my dad, myself, and a very good friend of mine, built our dream house in Steveston, on a piece of my granddads old dairy farm. It was a perfect spot to raise our family. I have many fond memories of our time spent there. In 2001, after our girls had moved out and started their own careers, we downsized, and moved to Ladner, to be closer to our golf club in Beach Grove. Fortunately, we started doing a lot of travelling before we retired, so I don't have a huge bucket list.

In 2010, after coming home from a trip in the Middle East, I noticed a marked difference in strength between my right and left arm. Shortly thereafter, the tips of my right hand started to tingle and go numb. One and a half years later, and many diagnostics later, I was diagnosed



Doug and Dyann Russell

with atypical ALS. Atypical, because, besides the muscle loss, I also have this numbness on the right side of my body. Our family was devastated, but quickly to take what time is given.

The ALS Clinic at GF Strong, and the ALS Society of BC, has been a great support for both my family and myself. Many friends have come forward with support, and offers of help. Right now, I am still mobile, and still have the partial use of my left hand, but I know I will be taking them up on their offers. The loss of more and more of one's body, (and

one's dignity), is something I see coming down the track. So far, the losses have been slow and incremental, and so you learn to deal.

My wife Dyann, is a critical care nurse, but now works in the community. She has had patients with ALS, and so has seen all the stages. Her knowledge and experience has been invaluable.

Our family is looking forward to going on a vacation together to Maui in the fall. After that, we'll see. My sense of things is, you do what you can do today, and when the situation changes, adjust.

What is ALS?

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), often referred to as "Lou Gehrig's Disease," is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord. Motor neurons reach from the brain to the spinal cord and from the spinal cord to the muscles throughout the body.

The progressive degeneration of the motor neurons in ALS eventually leads to their death. When the motor neurons die, the ability of the brain to initiate and control muscle movement is lost. With voluntary muscle action progressively affected, patients in the later stages of the disease may become totally paralyzed.



The PGA of BC Golfathon for ALS presented by uniPHARM & Medicine Centre Pharmacies Charitable Foundation, raised over \$150,000 for ALS in June. The 7 year grand total raised by the Golfathon in B.C. now exceeds \$715,000. PGA of BC golf pros and associates golf from sunrise to sunset receiving donations in support of their efforts.

In the photo l-r:
Jason Andrew, Crown Isle Golf Resort
Justin Howard, Glacier Greens Golf Course
Donald Miyazaki, Executive Director PGA of B.C.
Wendy Toyer, Executive Director ALS Society of B.C.
Scott Fraser, Founding Member of the Golfathon program
Pieter de la Rey, Glacier Greens Golf Course



"ALS is a devastating disease that affects the person living with ALS, their family and caregivers. There is no known cause or cure for ALS—yet. Your participation will help us to raise funds to support people living with ALS, and research to find the cure. Join me in the war against ALS" —**Wally Buono**, GM and VP of Operations of the BC Lions, and official spokesperson for the BC & Yukon Walks for ALS.

YEAR	EVENT	LOCATION	DATE	COORDINATOR	EMAIL	PHONE #
11	Victoria	University of Victoria, Parking Lot 6	Sun. Sept. 16	Rasool Rayani & Adele Watson	victoriawalk@alsbc.ca	250-786-0107
4	Whitehorse	Shipyards Park	Sun. Sept. 30	Donald C Watt	whitehorsetwalk@alsbc.ca	778-885-2111



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For more information on sponsorship or to advertise on this page, contact Wendy Toyer, Executive Director, ALS Society of BC at (604) 278-2257 or email to wendy@alsbc.ca. Donations of cash, real estate or securities are tax receiptable and greatly appreciated.

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WWW.ALSBC.CA WE NEED YOUR HELP.

To learn more about ALS or to make a donation online visit www.alsbc.ca

Phone: 604.278.2257 | Email: info@alsbc.ca

ALS Society of BC: 1233-13351 Commerce Parkway, Richmond B.C. V6V 2X7



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