

Leslie & Sherrie, Caregivers (9:38)

Leslie: Bob was diagnosed August 9th, 2011, his 55th birthday. His doctor told him that he had a 5cm by 7cm tumour on his right upper lobe lung. From there he... it was about a month later, he on his — I believe it was a Saturday — he had a like a mini-stroke. It felt like a stroke, his left leg — it was about a month — his left leg was numb and so we went to his doctor. The doctor sent him for a CT scan and that's when they found the eight tumours on his brain. They weren't that large. They knew that I guess radiation would...

Sherrie: Yeah, like if they started treatment right away that they could probably help Dad, they could prolong, they were thinking, because we had been told that, you know, after they found the tumours and everything, Mum and Dad told me that... Dad was I guess estimated to live until Christmas like his...

Leslie: They gave him a one percent chance to see Christmas.

Title card: Sherrie moved home for over 9 months to help her mom, Leslie, care for her father. Bob passed away 2 weeks before we did this interview.

Sherrie: His big test for himself was if he couldn't drive then he knew that he was sick. So he always pushed himself to drive, always pushed himself to drive. But there were those days that he couldn't drive. There was those days he wanted me to come along to appointments just in case he felt that maybe he didn't have the strength today but he was going to try it anyway. So I did go to a lot of appointments with Dad. I helped, you know, relay information to Mum. Dad was really not listening, and I don't blame him. So it was important that I did come back. And I feel really good that I did come back. Because if I didn't, I knew that, I just know that everyone would be in a different place right now if I hadn't been able to come back and help. I don't think, I think Dad would have been the one percent that they would have thought, you know. Because coming back and giving Dad just that extra push telling every day to stay strong... because me and Dad never had a good relationship. We started rebuilding it before he got sick, so I think for him to see me come back and support him the way I did really helped him.

Two full-time jobs

Leslie: I was thinking that I can't imagine working and doing that, or looking after Bob, there's no way.

Sherrie: Like there was lots of errands and stuff that had to be done you know, doctor's appointments. Mum would have missed a lot of work, would have had a lot of half days, stuff like that. It would have been way too much.

Leslie: We even — even overnight — once we had the hospital bed moved into the living room, basically we turned the living room into a hospital room. I was sleeping on the couch, and I was up three, four, five times a night with him. I couldn't imagine having to do that and then be up at six o'clock and leave the house at 7 am to be at work for 8.30, and work all day and then do that all over again. There's no way. So I was glad that I was on the time off from for stress leave but...you know it's it all worked out in the sense that I had to be there for Bob.

Palliative care

Sherrie: He didn't like hospitals. Like we knew he was going to be at home because there was no way he was going to be stuck in the hospital for the last two, three weeks, four months, however long it was. You know, there was no way... that we knew, I think we knew from the beginning that he was going to be at home. We were going to be getting in whatever we needed shipped into the house, yeah, I think that was...

Leslie: And I made the decision to contact the palliative care...because it was like in, I guess it was like the beginning of March...

Sherrie: He was just so sick. He couldn't walk. He couldn't use the bathroom...

Leslie: ...where the point came where I couldn't get him in and out of bed anymore. And I knew that there would be more help come in with this program. I didn't expect the help that I got, it was just absolutely, like I said, once again, absolutely wonderful.

Sherrie: Yeah, like Dad was starting to lose like bodily functions, like couldn't use the bathroom and stuff. So, you know, all that started deeming towards having to go to the hospital. Having to have a nurse take care of him. Mum made the decision to have palliative care, because it's at the home, we have nurses coming in, support, you know, bed, everything that Dad needs, a commode, you know, whatever he needed. So I think it was an easy decision. It was hard, but it was easy, because we knew that it was going to be at home. Like it was always going to be into palliative care at home — never to the hospital.

Leslie: Yeah, and too there was always the offer. If I can't handle the... Ruby was the social worker and the nurses always reminded me, if this is getting too much for you, we've got a room at St. Pierre hospital that's palliative care, and it's like, you know, like there's his room and here's my room...

Sherrie: It definitely, home care like that, personal care like that, isn't easy. It's rewarding, at the end of it. It's rewarding, knowing how well you did and you did the best you could for the person you loved to make them comfortable and content as far as you knew. You

know it's rewarding, but it's not easy.

Loss of support

Leslie: People stopped coming over, stopped calling.

Sherrie: Dad used to have friends come over. Mum and Dad used to have friends come over, stop by, every day almost, someone called every day, just to say hi. And then once Dad got diagnosed, people stopped coming around, stopped asking how we were doing. It's like everyone got scared of the C-word, like it was contagious or something, get it off.

Leslie: Yeah, I found that very — I found that very, very strange.

Sherrie: Everyone just kind of ran away. Dad didn't have anybody other than me and Mum. He really didn't — you know everyone stopped.

Leslie: And mind you there was over 250 people at the funeral. You know? [Sherrie overlapping — Over 250 people at the funeral you know? So it's like..] And actually, when Bob was finally bedridden, I did phone his friends. And a few of them did come to see him. I basically told them if you don't come now, you know, you probably won't be seeing Bob again. So in the course of the month of March he did have a few of his friends from work, and what not, come over and visit him.

Sherrie: If we could tell friends anything — don't stray away, it's the worst thing.

Finding strength

Leslie: Years ago, I don't know how many years I've said this, but I've said it over and over again, I don't think I could ever live with a sick person. And I have, you know, done it for complete 24-7 from November until April. But even, you know, when Bob first got sick, you know, I thought to myself, I shouldn't have ever said that. I'm being punished for saying something like that, you know. And then...I just, you got to...you have...you have to do it. [Sherrie: You got to do it. You got to do it.]

Leslie: There's no way I could've, you know, turned my back on my daughter or my husband. There's no way. There was a couple of times where it was tough for me and — especially towards the end, I'd say almost towards the middle of March — I was contemplating the St. Pierre hospital and then I went — no, no, Bob wouldn't want that. And then it was, well hey, get up and, got to do it. So it's just — just something within you I guess that just helps you helps you through it.