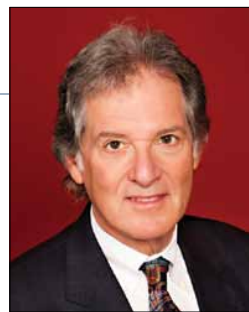


LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



You can't judge a book by looking at the cover.
—Ellas Otha Bates (Bo Diddley), 1962

Last Saturday night, I got in my 4Runner and headed up to Frederick, Maryland, to receive a donation from the Fraternal Order of Eagles. A patient of mine was State President this past year and, during that time, he developed diffuse large B-cell lymphoma, yet carried on his duties during his R-CHOP chemotherapy. Of note is that his father had died of colon cancer, his two brothers had died from cancer, and his mother's five siblings all died from cancer, so, when he had to select a charity during his tenure, there was no doubt what it was going to be. At one clinic visit, he asked me to apply for a grant for \$5,000 to support our clinical research. I complied, and was now off to the dinner reception at their 107th Annual Convention. It was held in the somewhat run-down FOE hall, in the room that also serves as the cafeteria and the bingo parlor. The invitation listed "Open Bar, 5–6:00, Dinner, 6–8:00, Music by the Dixie Wind, 8–midnight." I arrived at 5:00, and my host a few minutes after that, along with his wife, children, siblings, stepchildren, and son's fiancée. The room eventually filled up with people, most of whom seemed to know each other well. It was clear that these were simple working people, for whom this event was a really big deal. A few of the ladies were dressed up, primarily those at the dais, and, of the limited number of men who wore suit jackets, most looked and acted like it was not a regular occurrence. I was certainly overdressed for the occasion and felt a bit uncomfortable. I tried, somewhat unsuccessfully, to make idle chatter with those at my table, but had difficulty relating to the topics at hand. Eventually, we lined up as our table number was called for the food that was being served by the Ladies Auxiliary from tables in the center of the room—fried chicken, pork roast, and mashed potatoes, and, notably, everyone was pouring on impressive amounts of extra salt. The woman next to me in line was stuffing little tubs of imitation butter into her bra and, when I stared in amazement, she told me, "Well, I don't have any pockets, now do I?"

And then the meeting program began and I learned what they were all about—"People Helping People" is their motto. Throughout the year, they raise money for worthy charities, and this night was for lymphoma, because of the Chapter President, and prevention of child abuse, for the Women's Auxiliary President. They spent over two hours thanking each other for all the work they had done in the past year, and introduced the new leader-

ship for the coming year. They told some stories about each other, and a few off-color jokes. Everyone who did anything to help the cause was given due credit, and many received a gift. At the end of this ceremony, over 4 hours after my arrival, I was called up by my patient, the President, to make a short speech and to receive the check. I was moved by the introduction he gave me. Ordinarily he is quite a character in clinic, like he was not taking his disease and its treatment terribly seriously. But now there were tears in his, his wife's, and his daughter's eyes as they recalled what he had gone through over the past 10 months. Their gratitude was touching. What I didn't know was that the grant I applied for was only the beginning: they have raffles, bowling tournaments, a golf tournament, a cash bash, and a haircutting event. A little here, a little there, and it ended up being not one check, but several checks totaling over \$16,400 for our clinical research and for the Lymphoma Research Foundation!!! And that was just for me; a similar amount went to the children's cause. I was speechless (a rare and oft wished for occurrence). As I left for the evening, I got many handshakes, pats on the back, and expressions of gratitude from these kind and generous people.

To put this event into perspective: I saw a patient yesterday who I have been caring for since the mid-1980s for her CLL. Her course has been challenging, and I have saved her life on numerous occasions; most notably, she is 5 years since the diagnosis of the dreaded Richter's transformation, yet she remains in complete remission off all treatment so that she can enjoy her Bethesda house with its indoor swimming pool, her house at the shore, and her 100-acre horse farm in an exclusive town in Virginia. Yet, in all her years, she has never contributed anything to our hospital, cancer center, or the Lymphoma Research Ride, and not for lack of asking her.

So, as Bo would infer, it is not what is in your pocket, it is what is in your heart. I certainly saw that close up and personal from the brothers and sisters of the FOE.

Until next month . . .

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Bruce D. Cheson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bruce D. Cheson