

PROLOGUE

When I first heard Briggs's voice on the phone, I actually looked at the receiver as I was listening, thinking it was like nothing I'd ever heard before. Weeks later, after our first encounter in person, lasting barely a minute, I walked away thinking I'd never met anyone who was remotely like her. Our bond became the same, as if formed of never-before-felt dust in our hands from a calmer universe. But along with that calm came carousing together, living in three countries, and travels rarely short of adventures. We were writing partners, co-conspirators in sociology and comedy, and Briggs was the funniest, sparklingest-eyed playmate a child or adult, this one anyway, could want. I used to tell people that about the biggest philosophical disagreement we had on how to live life was that Briggs liked blue cheese and I didn't. And we liked each other, as I write, "to the core; and when one of us was in distress, the other felt it to the core."

Inconsolable on my first Christmas Day without her, late in the evening I got a call from a woman who had been a roommate of Briggs's when she was in hospital over a year before, Adrienne. She's in her seventies and Briggs and I were very fond of her. She was back in hospital and was calling to see how we both were. Her voice was so cheery, I hesitated, and she said, "Paul, no," and it took me a long few seconds to get out that I'd lost Briggs on July 1st. She's a strong woman but she started crying, upset as could be. She was so sorry for Briggs, and for me. First she said, "You were so devoted to each other," and then as it hit her more, "Oh Paul, you were the sweetest, closest couple I've ever seen." You can imagine how many times I've remembered those words.

Adrienne has emphysema and she had just had a near-death scare. Her oxygen had been disconnected and she had only survived because the next shift's nurse came in and saw that she was turning blue. This was the same hospital where Briggs had died, not from her cancer but from mistakes in care, for a complication the doctors had brought on, during what was meant to be a short stay. [Adrienne has since died. One of her two daughters let me know in a touching card, ending, "Thank you and your lovely departed Briggs for being so kind to her."]

Briggs had been making notes to write this book to try to make sure that no-one else

had to go through all the harm that was done to her. Hand in hand with that, it was supposed to be a victory book, and it had been on the way to being just that. Briggs would be alive today if she had never been to see one other doctor after being diagnosed, and without all the physical damage that was done to her, including a grapefruit-sized wound from a misprescribed 'blood-building' drug that put her in hospital for thirty-one days, a drug I later learned there had been a congressional hearing on the safety of just the year before. In Briggs's name I want to try to help clarify whatever situation you may be in...the frightening, unfamiliar beginning, feeling overwhelmed in the middle of it, staving off a seemingly unstoppable downslide, or maybe even despairing at having fallen out of remission. Whether you're a cancer sufferer or caregiver, this book should enable you to take control far beyond whatever may seem possible to you right now, and that control may be life-saving as it would have been for Briggs.

I relate stories about remarkable, caring, responsible doctors, and the quality of care in a hospital can, and has been shown to in study after study, depend on where it is in America or the world, but from Briggs's and my experience over the course of fifteen months, including at two of the premier cancer centres in New York and the world, as well as from so many other patients' and caregivers' experiences I go into, those doctors and hospitals are far from being in the majority. One caregiver said to me she felt as if the doctors she'd been dealing with were "just bad mechanics trying anything," and over and over people we met said they just didn't know *how* to take more control. Most of them had gone looking for books, as I had, and so Briggs wanted to write the one that wasn't there, going from the moment of her diagnosis through every single step of our experience with cancer and the medical profession. Once Briggs was diagnosed I began hundreds upon hundreds of hours of research. I'd written articles on nutrition and so I knew the drill, and it repeatedly saved Briggs from yet more harm and markedly improved her condition time and again. I didn't know I'd be the one writing her story, but at each stage, as virtually every procedure a cancer patient will routinely encounter comes up, I've included comprehensive facts, chronologically as we came to need and know them (too many of the most crucial, we found, un- or sketchily known to doctors themselves), along with insights on drugs, radiation, harmful standard hospital procedures, alternative treatments and supplements (most of which don't work but some of which do, remarkably so). Reading it's one thing to be prepared, but having the experience and research there to be able to refer back to is what I needed so many times right when we were in the thick of the things that we were coming up against.

We certainly had no idea of the battle we were in for with the medical profession, far more than with the cancer, and it's only once it's all laid out before you that you can see the patterns and stand a chance of keeping ahead of them. That said, any doctor, nurse, or technician, or for that matter hospital administrator, who laudably went into his or her profession for the right reasons will, I think, after reading this have yet more to draw on, including in, I'm sure, daily combating from within the laxness, the arrogance that all too often comes of being poorly informed, and the abandoning of, as Dr. William Coley, whom I talk about in the paragraph after next, put it, "the duty to the patient." As I write in the book, "It wasn't Briggs's time to die. There is no schedule. It was a matter of what we were doing versus what they were doing, which is why I had been trying so hard to keep her out of hospital.

Briggs also wanted to get immunotherapies--a word I want to, and hope you'll help me make, as familiar as "cancer"--on the fast track for everyone. They're in limited use in such respected medical centres as at Oxford and Duke universities (I write in the book about a rare primetime news report on the successes at Duke [standing in yet greater contrast with the opposite end of the spectrum as reported on *60 Minutes* in February, 2012, the resignation by and far-reaching scandal over an oncologist-researcher at Duke accused of flagrantly falsifying data, once again in the field of chemotherapy, historical precedents in which in it and radiation I talk about in the book]).

Immunotherapy's effectiveness extends to all solid-tumor cancers including colorectal, breast, brain, pancreatic, prostate, renal, lung, and sarcomas. As a startling example of the results being achieved in dozens of university hospitals, a patient in Los Angeles who was diagnosed with brain cancer at age 33 and given two months to live on chemotherapy and radiation was still, as of the end of 2011, cancer-free over eight years after getting a second opinion and being treated with immunotherapy at UCLA Medical Center. And yet, far from new, immunotherapy, in resurgence in spite of the cancer industry and with none of the side effects whatsoever of chemotherapy and radiation, has been around, its cures well-documented not in alternative clinics but in the foremost hospitals and cancer centres in the world, since the early 1890s. Dr. Coley, a premier surgeon at New York Cancer Hospital, which would become Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, a lecturer in clinical surgery at Columbia University, a professor of clinical surgery at Cornell Medical College, had developed and used it, as did other doctors at the Mayo Clinic, Johns Hopkins, and equally respected institutions in Europe, to cure or induce near-regression even in patients who would today be classified as "hopeless." The story, which I go into, of Coley's exhaustively poring

over the hospital's patient records and developing his treatment is itself inspirational, driven as he was by losing a 17-year-old girl to sarcoma he hadn't been able to save with surgery. The subsequent active suppression of it over decades by proponents of radiation and chemotherapy, which I also go into, is, by contrast, a shameful page from history.

Cancer cells disguise themselves from the immune system, whereas immunotherapy either mobilizes the immune system through inactive bacteria or alerts it to the presence of cancer by the injection of proteins found only in the particular cancer cells and no healthy cells, which is why it's so safe. An immunotherapy I was trying to get for Briggs has been in infrequent clinical trials since 2001, and with its unique results and perfect safety profile it should easily have been available for Briggs by 2007. But immunotherapy is inexpensive compared with chemotherapy and related cancer drugs, and pharmaceutical companies give it no priority. Briggs was driven so far down by chemotherapy for her advanced rectal cancer, yet in the book I mention an extensive study that estimates the actual overall contribution of chemotherapy to 5-year survival in adults to be no more than 2.1% in America and 2.3% in Australia. It's in fact surgery, if solid-tumor cancers, including rectal, can be caught in their early stages that yields overall cure rates of up to 80 percent.

I write at one point that I wanted "this book to be an immersive experience, both bad and good, medical and personal, overarching and detailed, so many specifics I know from other caregivers and patients shared in ways unimaginable before going through any form of this and so important to extrapolate from," and that includes the cancer and the medical profession having gotten between us in ways I'd never let happen again if I could only have it over. To be armed, in other words, as Briggs and I so very much want you to be. To know, for example, that while irradiated blood is almost universally used in cancer centers, the rate of death from elevated potassium or lethal ECG change has dramatically increased since irradiated blood was introduced nationwide in Japan. To be armed, as another example, with the knowledge that one study reported in the *New York Times*, led by the University of California, San Francisco found that radiation delivered in CT scans, excessive to begin with, can vary up to a massive 13 times the prescribed amount depending on the facility, while MRIs can safely provide the information usually needed.

I had set up a petition to get Briggs that immunotherapy, and the CEO of Google at that time, Eric Schmidt, had arranged for a video I'd put up on YouTube with a link to the petition to be spotlighted. Actors Susan Sarandon, Alan Rickman, and Jimmy Smits had already signed, and Jimmy, an old friend of Briggs's, had also put me in touch with an entertainment foundation closely aligned with then national-news-anchor Katie Couric and her

organization's fight against cancer. Four days before Briggs died I heard from them that they were going to Katie Couric to get her to make a personal appeal to the pharmaceutical company for the immunotherapy for Briggs, that they were going "to make this happen." It's unbearable to live with knowing that if I'd made better decisions in the face of what the doctors were doing at the hospital that I could have kept Briggs alive just when it looked like we would finally get access to the treatment that could cure her.

The causes of cancer are shockingly out of control, with the odds now being one in three that as a woman you will be diagnosed with cancer within your lifetime, and one in two if you're a man. The American Cancer Society estimated a record 1,529,000 new diagnoses of cancer in 2010, with 569,000 deaths in that one year alone [and in 2011, higher again at 1,597,000 new diagnoses and 572,000 deaths]. And early detection is undependable when you have even the resources of actor Michael Douglas, not diagnosed till stage IV despite his continually bringing up his symptoms, or producer Laura Ziskin ("Spiderman"), not diagnosed with breast cancer till stage III.

I changed the petition to call for immunotherapies to be put on the fast track for all in Briggs's name and I put up a video in her memory with a link to it. Over twenty concerned stars and public figures such as Penelope Cruz, Scarlett Johansson, Naomi Watts, Elle Macpherson, Bradley Cooper, director Ken Burns, journalist Meredith Vieira, and tennis legends Billie Jean King and Chris Evert have now generously added their names. You can find the petition-signatories page by doing a Google search for *Petition for Briggs* (or if you're reading this electronically the link is www.PhaethonWorld.com/PetitionForBriggs.html). When I needed to go through representatives for any of the signatories listed at the link, they too were supportive, actress Katherine Heigl's publicist even asking another client of hers who'd lost her mother to cancer if she might want to add her name, which she did. Briggs would have been pleased with how Billie Jean King and Chris Evert came to sign the petition. She had always wanted me to make a tennis video and so I did, sending the link to Billie Jean and Chris after putting it up on YouTube. I write in the video description about teaching Briggs tennis, which has it's funny-if-sad side--she had eye problems as a girl and said the only 'sport' she was good at was the pogo stick, because she "knew where it was"...and yet she ended up playing so well that people would applaud her shots. The last tennis racquet she held in her hand was an original-condition Wilson T2000, the steel racquet Billie Jean and Jimmy Connors used, that I'd bought her as a surprise and taken into the hospital...which now sits in a corner, never played with. You can find that video, which also has a link to the petition-signatories page, by doing a Google or YouTube search for

Briggs on the Bench (or the link is www.YouTube.com/watch?v=aZ8dT-6dERc).

[Beyond the worst possible tragedy of this, there were so many unexpected little things I underestimated the dispiriting effect of on Briggs, when so much of this fight depends on getting on top of things as they happen, and for me personally, since losing her and feeling it myself it's often what they signify, cumulatively disheartening, a small thing such as sunlight catching my hair in the tennis video, how much the color had gone, *seeing* my grief physically out of my hands, while at the crucial far end was Briggs seeing a photograph of what that grapefruit-sized wound had looked like before it began healing and feeling so relieved that I'd asked her to not look at it before then. Less possible to take in hand in much of any way was something else we'd begun hearing stories about. While particularly in the beginning Briggs had the support that women especially talk about getting from friends after being diagnosed, toward the end of the book I write about the unspoken underside of the ramifications of cancer with friends and family that can make the fight against it all the more arduous, the trying daily struggle feel more hopeless, and that if you may be experiencing it or do come to, it may help to know you're not alone and that it's most likely not you or anything you've done.]

I hope the outrage of all Briggs had to endure will stir your emotions to talk about her, write about her in any way, to sign the petition and tell everyone you're comfortable with telling about it, to bring to an end this disgraceful era of chemotherapy and radiation and their side effects and recurrences and secondary cancers, and to usher in safe, effective treatments, most immediately immunotherapy. It already exists. [As two more examples, first President Carter's special assistant emailed to say she would be taking up his signing the petition, adding, "We are certainly strong supporters," and going on to say that her own mother was diagnosed with cancer when she was pregnant with her and was cured at MD Anderson "32 years ago"--with immunotherapy. And second, with all the expert/oncologist quotes and sound bites on pancreatic cancer being incurable in the wake of Apple co-founder Steve Jobs's passing in October, 2011, I thought I'd see what I could find on immunotherapy and pancreatic cancer. I may know where to look, but still, it took all of fifteen minutes, a search it was obvious no-one in the national media had bothered to do, to turn up an abstract on the U.S. National Library of Medicine site, from the venerable University of Würzburg in Germany, where the X ray was discovered. It was from 2006, five years ago as I write this. It details immunotherapy having resulted in a complete remission of liver metastases (versus Steve Jobs having had a liver transplant), and in fact, after 6 months' vaccination, "no evidence of the disease," a complete remission of the

72-year-old patient's stage IV pancreatic cancer. (I had been trying to get Microsoft co-founder and activist-philanthropist Bill Gates to sign the petition, and his very pertinent reaction is also in the book.)]

It's well past time for the cancer industry to be called to account, not to mention, with everything Briggs was put through with not a single positive result, doctors and hospitals themselves. And in the end, the only control over the cancer and the pain came from what we did ourselves, including a root previously unknown to me despite my having a fairly comprehensive knowledge in that area, its use going back thousands of years, that stopped Briggs's pain completely within three days, pain no drug could control; and a diet I devised from research and my background in nutrition, in this case in particular spurred by obscure studies confirming my premise that I uncovered on the American Society of Clinical Oncology site. With it we brought Briggs's CEA level, the measure of colorectal cancer, from 60 all the way down to 10, normal being under 2.5-5, Briggs's last oncologist dumbfounded but acknowledging it, saying, "Whatever you're doing, keep doing it. It's working." In fact, it looked as if there was every chance we were going to get the cancer into remission ourselves without even the immunotherapy.

No amount of writing and grief and anger can bring Briggs back to me, can give her back the decades of life taken from her that she so wanted to live, but the grief and anger have fueled this book day after day; and at night as they've woken me out of tortured stretches of sleep to make notes. Reliving those fifteen months turned out to be probably the worst thing I could have done. It made everything so clear that the grief and anger go deeper, and my despair and self-reproach know no bounds. I write in the book about "not wanting Briggs to be solely identified with cancer, which would be even more unfair for her," and I set out to here-and-there take a moment from the medical onslaught, from the "next something," for the Briggs who wasn't a patient, a victim, for the relevant bits and pieces of Briggs that give her a face, and such a beautiful face it was, against the objectifying of her and other cancer sufferers, a perspective-in-contrast of the ever-smiling, smile-inducing Briggs (not to mention that captivatingly pretty face inspiring my being forcefully offered two horses and a camel for her on a desolate back road in Egypt by a man in black on horseback leading eight other men with sabers).

Within this book is Briggs's book and the provocations for real change in her memory that she so wanted for other cancer sufferers and caregivers, for anyone touched by cancer but also any serious illness. And the backdrop to that is our cherishing of each other throughout our years together and half the world that almost allowed us to beat her cancer.

For the amount of tears in the book, I need to say I've *never* been given to them before. Neither was Briggs; she was invariably too happy. Her tears began with what she called her "cancer cry," but most of them came from all the medical harm. The title Briggs was planning to use for her book was *I Didn't Think One Person Had This Many Tears*, and once it applied more than I could ever have imagined to me, I was going to use the same title in writing the book in her memory. For the sake of ending the tears, I thought her *Cancer Cry* would importantly make the book easier to find. Within it, it holds for me every tear she shed and a rallying cry.

No-one should have to go through anything like all that Briggs had to endure. Beyond hoping that with the book you'll be able to take immediate control and make changes every bit as dramatic as you may need, through it and the petition, with your help, there's a touchstone that came from Briggs that can in all reality, within years instead of decades, be turned into a gift, really, to this era and to generations to come: "No matter what age you are, you're too young to die from cancer."