



Top of the Obelisk, the Diamond, Longs Peak

Dear Friends,

October 12, 2018

Since my last update, I spent 10 days at home under the loving care of Monika, and David Cooks, my dear friend from Bend. Monika is plugging along, trying to maintain whatever normalcy she can in her life when she's not here just holding me in her arms.

Cooks is some sort of a cross between a superhero and a saint. He's stayed with me pretty much 24/7, and shepherded me through a bunch a nasty pain crises in addition to managing an unimaginable amount of logistical work. At one point he was my student but he's become a far better acupuncturist than I ever was, and I've been benefitting from those skills on a daily basis as well. Monika and I would be lost with out him.

Roger Briggs is my social director and the other arm of my logistics team. He's managing a large amount of email that I'm receiving, and coordinating the input I get, which isn't much. A few other dear friends have been close by, but I'm unable to see many visitors. The pain and nausea characteristic of this disease have been an ongoing challenge. We are constantly adjusting the meds, which work for a day or two but then become virtually ineffective. Nighttime is the most difficult for pain, though the last two nights were considerably better due to a dilaudid pain pump. I only have a few hours each day when I'm lucid enough to read, write, or talk much,

so please forgive me for not responding to the many messages that have been sent to me.

Last weekend brought two midnight visits to urgent care with unmanageable pain. This landed me back to the hospital a few days ago for a new round of pain management strategies. First, we tried a nerve block procedure, but it proved ineffective, probably because the cancer has spread so much. Today I am being transferred to an acute hospice care facility in Longmont. The plan is to stay there a few days until we are confident that the pain meds are working, then to go home. We are not pursuing any heroic, life-extending treatments. My goal is to die well.

In the time I have left I need to finish my part of a textbook concerning the synthesis of acupuncture and osteopathic palpatory techniques. To do this work, the meds have to be working well enough to help me manage the pain without leaving me incoherent and nodding off.

A number of my closest colleagues have flown in to provide support for this project. Rayen Anton traveled from Barcelona and is collaborating with me on several chapters. Rayen and I worked together as much as I could manage and made good progress while she was here. Dan Bensky, my longtime friend and coauthor of this book, arrives today and will spend parts of the next four days working with me. After Dan leaves, Kailey Brennan, one of my students from Denver, will coordinate some 2-hour scribing sessions. I need to spend whatever time and energy I can summon to finish this up.

Last week I had a visit from Miki Shima, an elder brother in the practice of Traditional East Asian Medicine and a very close friend. About 10 years ago I asked Miki why he had gone back to practicing Shinto, the ancestral religion of Japan. We all love nature, rocks and trees, but do they really have to have a spirit that we must propitiate? He explained that Shinto was really about gratitude. We don't so much worship rocks and streams as we express our gratitude for the gift of our being part of the universe in whatever way, good or bad. This insight has shaped my own Zen practice ever since.

It was good to have Miki here to help me further catalyze this practice, because now it is game on. I offer my sincere gratitude for my 30-year marriage to a magnificent woman; for a lifetime of wandering in the mountains; for the many patients and students I have had the privilege to have worked with; and for the love and support that so many of you have expressed.

Perhaps most difficult of all I am trying to fully embrace the reality of my situation with gratitude. I want to go beyond just coping with it all, to a place where there is nowhere else I would rather be. My deepest thanks to all of you for helping me to work toward that.

Love,
Chip

To see Chip's earlier Updates go to:
<https://stillwaterhealthboulder.com/charles-site/>

Please send all correspondence to:
Iamchipspancreas@gmail.com