

It's been a bit. As you get older, you come to understand that it's a good thing to have plans. Almost as good as being flexible when life makes a turn down a road that was nowhere near the plan that you were looking towards. I guess that's what makes life such an adventure. You can map out your life and set yourself up to be successful, but it's pretty important to have and understand your options when circumstances change those plans.

Plans are merely a starting point. After all, you need to point your life in some direction, right? Nobody ever makes a plan and merrily heads down a straight path of achieving said plan. Life has many twists and turns, some expected and some that come out of nowhere. Being able to adjust is one of the most important lessons we have in order to make our plans work.

When I got the opportunity to retire early in 2010, I was a pretty happy camper. My day job was simply my day job. As a writer, you understand that the word writer and starving are synonyms, and with three daughters under your roof, you know better than to waste a lot of time arguing with publishers about the merits of good exposure. Ya need your day job. Good exposure doesn't pay for braces.

I had it all planned out. I was going to retire at 62 (2013). I had downsized my life to a point of becoming a minimalist. Actually, that wasn't a big move, really. More dressing... I went from having nothing to proclaiming myself a minimalist.... just sounded better and made me feel as if I was actually doing something.

Anyway, when your company comes out and tells you they will give you a wheel-barrel full of money and let you keep your benefits until your 65 if you'll simply stop coming to work, who am I to challenge their thinking? After all, they are talking to a guy who had no desire to be Employee of the Month, climb any corporate ladders or get giddy about wearing jeans on casual Friday! It was my day job. It was simply a paycheck I could count on while I argue those merits of good exposure to publishers. You'll pay me not to come to work any more? seeYa!

I was in heaven! I was going to hit my retirement running. This was my time. I had enough exposure. It was time for me to make my move in the writing world. No more Mr. Nice Guy.

Then came the lumps..... Time to adjust.

I became DudePa to my first grandchild in 2011, but in early 2012, my daughter told me about the lumps under her arms.

Stage three breast cancer.

For the next two years I didn't give writing a minute of my time. It was all about my family and doing what I could to make things easier.

By 2014, I was visiting my daughter at a local cemetery void of any feelings but empty numbness. This was not my retirement plan. This is nobody's plan. How did my journey take such a wrong turn?

For the next three years, all I wanted was to be DudePa to my grandchildren - another daughter having added two girls to go with my grandson. I was done fighting for recognition in the writing world. My heart had no more fight in it.

It's funny how life goes. My daughter's passing took me down a path I never imagined, yet it also brought me back. Too many people were letting her death overshadow her life, and I was not going to let that happen. Her 37 year life was a great story that needed to be told. Her death was just a sad statistic of another young mother who died too soon.

So I dusted off the keyboard and created "*It's Positively Cancer... a daughter's blog, a dad's farewell*" I published it myself - which is saying a LOT for this non-techie old man.

It felt good to write again. I followed that book up with a new one, "*My First Seven Days in Heaven- and more*" dusting off an earlier book I wrote and adding more stories. It was my apology book for making everyone cry with my daughter's book.... this one was more Andy Smith-ish... light-hearted comedy that makes a good point.

I don't think I'll ever go back to my original retirement plan, but at least I'm feeling good about writing again. I feel good that I will honor my daughter's life by getting back to living my life, instead of living her death and surrendering my life.

She once told me, "Dad, I'm not sure if I'm going to beat cancer, but I promise, I'll never let cancer beat me."..... I'm with ya, kid.

Just A Thought