

Prologue

It was the top of the first inning and the Angels were down nine to nothing to the Red Sox. Up first was the ever-tenacious Kyle Wyborne, a member of the Angels his entire career. He made his way to the plate slowly, his steely eyes fixed on the pitcher. You could tell he would not be deterred from leading off the inning with a hit. The pitcher wound up and let go a pitch right down the heart of the plate. Kyle's muscles tensed as he swung the bat and connected. As he struck the ball mightily, the announcer roared with approval, "Open the window Aunt Edna, here it comes!"

Kyle appeared to struggle, the crowd unsure if he could make it out of the batter's box. But I knew better. His mother Donna had told me in advance that Kyle had been practicing all week to walk without his walker for the first time in public. You see, this was the Miracle League of San Diego, a baseball league for children with disabilities, and Kyle was a five-year old with multiple disabilities including one leg shorter than the other and an outturned foot that required him to use a walker. His buddy took his walker from him while Kyle struggled to gain his balance. And as he walked slowly to first base, a

determined look on his face, the crowd began to realize the miracle they were witnessing. We had watched Kyle for two seasons now and were accustomed to his smile whenever he worked his way onto the field. But his smile was not to be found. Rather, he was gritting his teeth because walking was so difficult for him. Kyle never stopped walking and by the time he rounded third base and headed for home, the entire crowd was on its feet giving him a standing ovation. The Red Sox players were cheering as well. When Kyle reached home, he slid face down onto home plate. I'm not sure whether he intended to slide or fell out of exhaustion, but either way, he had hit a home run to lead off the inning. There wasn't a dry eye in the crowd as we all turned to one another and shared a Miracle League moment. When he rose again, his buddy brought back his walker and helped him make his way to the dugout. When the second and final inning came around, and Kyle was now the final batter with his team trailing by a run, we witnessed the same miracle again. Kyle walked all the way home, slid onto the plate and tied the score to end the game.

This miracle would not have been possible but for my own miracle. I am a stage four melanoma survivor and at the time of my peak battles with this killer disease, there were no cures and few options. When my diagnosis went from stage three to stage four in 2005, I was told that my chances of living five years were less than five percent. But I made it past those five years and then some. I've been through ten surgeries, radiation therapy, gamma knife surgery on a brain tumor, six clinical trials (chemotherapy, immunotherapy, vaccine, combinations) and seven years of a maintenance clinical trial. My last clinical trial was pivotal in the FDA approving the immunotherapy drug Yervoy as a front-line treatment for metastatic melanoma.

Yervoy was the first drug approved for melanoma in more than 15 years and the first one proven to prolong life.

During about two years of virtually non-stop treatments and surgeries, creating the Miracle League of San Diego was the mission that drove me and kept me from thinking about myself and my condition. Between various treatments, I would attend community meetings, lead board and volunteer meetings, fund-raise or work with our partners on design issues. I remember speaking in front of a planning commission in the midst of bi-chemotherapy when my body was ravaged by five highly toxic chemicals and my strength was minimal. We didn't get what we wanted that evening, but I persevered and kept fighting. During this journey, I learned a great many things about myself and my capacity for making a difference in the lives of others. I hope this book can inspire you to find your passion as well. I'm living proof that it's never too late and you're never too old to make positive changes in your life.