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Looking death in the eye

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My wife and I try to stay involved whenever we can to help causes that seem deserving of as much support as we can possibly give.

Little did I know that what seemed then to be an act of generosity by my wife, would keep me awake nights for months.

Many of you may recall a column I wrote not long ago about the fact that, during most of our marriage, my wife has been saddled with the majority of the housework, childcare and, as my wife refers to it, "Bobcare" (a full-time job in and of itself).

She also worked full time as an English teacher par excellence. I thought the column would pretty much set me on Easy Street with her for at least a year or two, as most wives don't have their husbands pay tribute to them publicly like that. Although she was touched, I had no idea how things actually would play out.

Anyway, in May, while at the International Finger Lakes Wine Competition (for the benefit of Camp Good Days and Special Times) she bid on a present for me.

So far everything seems all well and good, right? Well, as I was schmoozing at a table with a few friends, Judy was bidding on a ride in a real, honest-to-God fighter jet in this week-end's ESL International Air Show.

The good news is that she won the high bid and got the gift of a lifetime for me. The bad news is, I don't even ride roller coasters. Only recently did I realize she'd been listening for many years as I discussed New York's estates and trusts laws, not just the laws of intestacy or end-of-life care planning, but also the fact that in New York, one who causes the death of another cannot inherit any portion of their estate, nor can they even remain entitled to life insurance benefits as a beneficiary.

It took me a little while, but I finally realized what she was up to: Once I'm up in a jet fighter plane, there is a very good likelihood that my heart will beat twice, then just stop.

Cause of death: natural causes; ability to learn estate and trust laws, and all the inherent loopholes embodied therein: priceless!

All kidding aside, I am extremely excited about the upcoming ride, because it is an opportunity to look death, (or least a huge fear) in the eye, to see who will blink first. Maybe this will help to make me aware of the courage the kids at Camp Good Days — or the patients fighting cancer — exhibit on a daily basis.



Apparently the jet I'm flying in will be going over Paetec Park during the soccer game, and we will fly overhead while the National Anthem is played. That is truly a wonderful honor. That may be the last thing I do.

Okay, enough doom and gloom. The truth is that I'm very excited about going up in that jet, and I'm sure my anxieties won't last more than a year or two after we've actually touched down.

Since I started this column discussing worthy causes, let me remind you about another wonderful event that will take place Saturday night at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center. Barbara Fogarty was taken from her family and friends by a virulent form of cancer last December. But thanks to new treatments developed right here in Rochester, Barbara lived four times longer than doctors originally predicted she would.

On Saturday, the Passion for Life — Passion for Cure Gala Fundraiser, will honor Fogarty and her physician, Paul Okunieff and will benefit the Wilmot Cancer Center. Okunieff continues to develop not only the treatment that extended her life but, along with other researchers, continues work on cutting edge treatments that may save the life of someone you love. He truly is an inspirational man, and I've had the honor of getting to know him over the past few months as this fundraiser has been planned.

For those of you who may not know, Sheriff Patrick O'Flynn, and County Executive Maggie Brooks are co-sponsoring the event, and WHAM's Chet Walker will be the emcee. This will be a night to remember because it is the very first gala of its kind. The passion the Fogarty family has shown in honoring Barbara has been inspirational to all of those around them. Her passion for life inspired those around her, too, and now has inspired an event that will benefit our community and, perhaps, the whole planet.

If you have not yet done so, call (585) 727-3877 for tickets and join us Saturday evening at The convention center. I can't wait to see what my wife buys me this time, if I survive the flight.

Robert L. Brenna Jr. is a partner in the Rochester law firm of Brenna, Brenna & Boyce PLLC, which his father founded. He is president of the New York State Academy of Trial Lawyers and concentrates his practice in the areas of estates and trusts and catastrophic personal injury. Brenna also hosts a popular Sunday morning radio program entitled "The Brenna & Brenna Law Forum," on WHAM 1180 AM and online at 8 a.m. at www.wham1180.com.