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RECOVERY, HEALTH AND HOPE FOR A

Lucky Life

In His New Book, Tom Brokaw Gets Personal As He Discusses His Recent Battle With Cancer

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Former NBC Nightly News anchor Tom Brokaw has shared many historic moments around the world with his viewers.

As an author, the Yankton and Pickstown native has also shared stories of those who left their mark on history. He captured the powerful stories of World War II veterans — including the late Howard “Hod” Nielsen of Yankton — in Brokaw’s best-selling book “The Greatest Generation.”

But perhaps the most difficult story for Brokaw to tell has been his own.

In August 2013, he was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a treatable but incurable blood cancer. At the time, Brokaw felt he had led a charmed life and his luck had run out.

During his battle with cancer, he has endured pain and suffering. He has also learned much about himself, his family and countless friends — both famous and not well-known — who have reached out to him.

Two years after his diagnosis, Brokaw is sharing his journey with readers through his book “A Lucky Life Interrupted: A Memoir of Hope.”

The 75-year-old Brokaw provided an update on his life for the *Press & Dakotan*. He also shared what he still wants to achieve in his life.

Brokaw said his cancer remains in remission.

“The remission is holding up,” he said. “I’m now concentrating on physical reconditioning.”

Writing his memoir was unlike any previous book that he authored, Brokaw said.

“Obviously, this book was very personal,” he said. “But it was also a guide for families going through similar experiences — what questions to ask, how to research additional information, how to deal with friends and well-wishers, and developing priorities.”

Brokaw characterizes his wife, the former Meredith Auld of Yankton; their three daughters and other family members as the rock on which he has heavily relied during his battle.

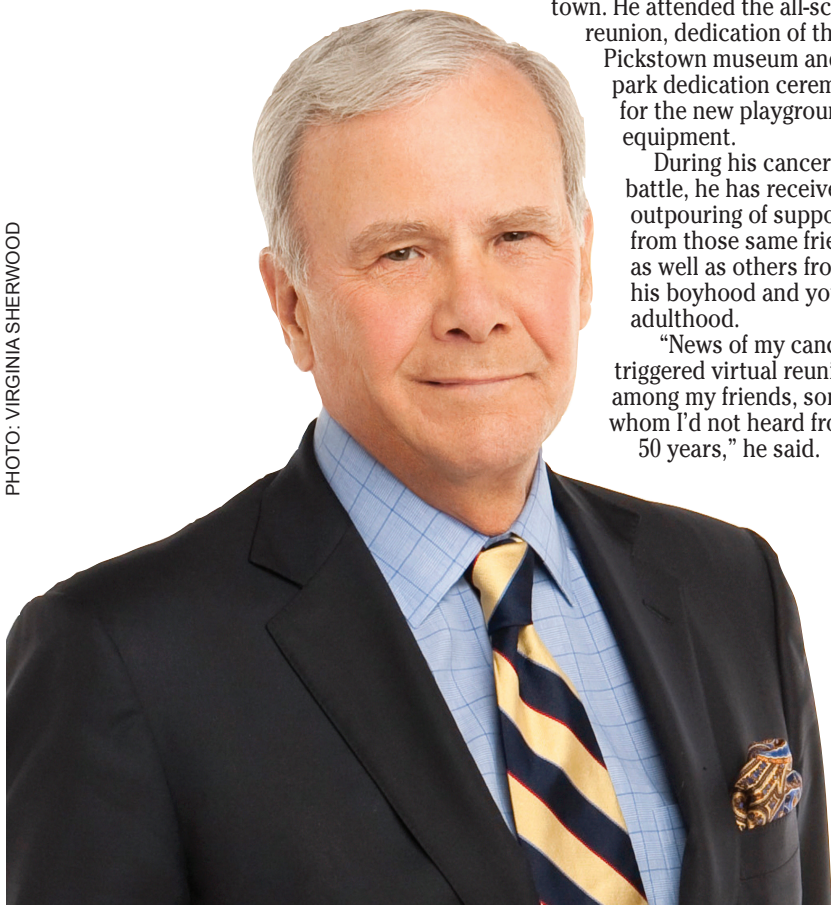
“Meredith and all members of my family became Team Brokaw,” he said. “They helped with everything from keeping track of meds to doing research on multiple myeloma to entertaining me with the latest gossip or grandchild antics and accomplishments.”

Brokaw has remained true to his South Dakota roots, including his June 2014 visit to Pickstown. He attended the all-school reunion, dedication of the new Pickstown museum and the park dedication ceremony for the new playground equipment.

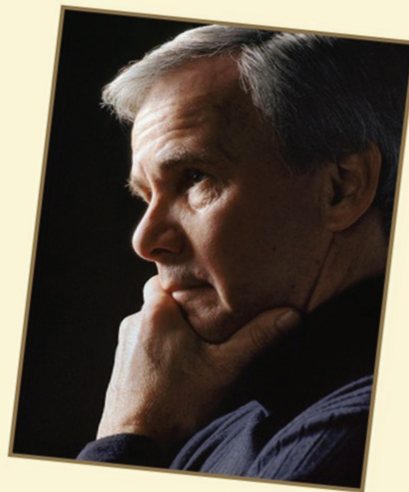
During his cancer battle, he has received an outpouring of support from those same friends as well as others from his boyhood and young adulthood.

“News of my cancer triggered virtual reunions among my friends, some of whom I’d not heard from in 50 years,” he said.

PHOTO: VIRGINIA SHERWOOD



TOM BROKAW



A Lucky Life Interrupted

A Memoir of Hope

Also in 2014, Brokaw received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Not surprisingly for someone who has covered virtually every major newsmaker, Brokaw received support from Presidents Barack Obama, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton; former First Lady Nancy Reagan and Cardinal Dolan of New York.

In addition, Brokaw got support from celebrities including recently retired CBS “Late Show” host David Letterman, “Daily Show” host Jon Stewart and retired National Basketball Association star turned sports commentator Charles Barkley.

However, Brokaw showed reluctance at first in announcing his cancer diagnosis — including during a November 2013 appearance on Stewart’s show to promote a documentary on John F. Kennedy.

Brokaw was undergoing chemotherapy at the time but hadn’t gone public.

“I didn’t want to be all over the Internet — ‘Tom Brokaw, cancer victim,’” he explained.

The news of Brokaw’s cancer broke in February 2014. Stewart responded with an email telling Brokaw,

Brokaw received a bit of therapeutic relief when he cursed — at least privately — New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady.

“During my worst days (of treatment), I’d pass a big Tom Brady poster at a bus stop, Tom looking healthy, handsome and not a care in the world,” Brokaw said. “I’d pause and offer a not very complimentary suggestion. As a New York Giants fan, it energized me.”

The two men would later come face to face, allowing Brokaw to share the story with the object of his scorn.

“He loved it and laughed aloud,” Brokaw said. “I was so impressed, I bet the Patriots in the Super Bowl.”

Brokaw uses his memoir to also share information about cancer and the U.S. health care system. While he enjoyed access to the best medical resources, he also ran into some of the same frustrations and situations faced by the everyday person.

In his book, he shares those lessons with his readers.

“I didn’t want to be all over the Internet — ‘Tom Brokaw, cancer victim.’”

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