

# LIVE WELL

## CANCER SURVIVAL TAKES MORE THAN JUST CHEMOTHERAPY

BY J. BRANDON LOWE

Ben Light got the shock of his life in May 2006 when his doctor discovered colon cancer.

"It was just blind luck," says Light. At the time, he was four years younger than the recommended age for getting a colonoscopy, but he had signed up for one after his wife, Beth, decided to get one herself. "I tell people I've won the lottery twice. The first time was when I met my wife, and the second time was finding colon cancer."

Light was thrust into the depression and shock that often come with a cancer diagnosis. Although the tribulations were tough, Light has found redemption in a local organization that reaches out to cancer patients.

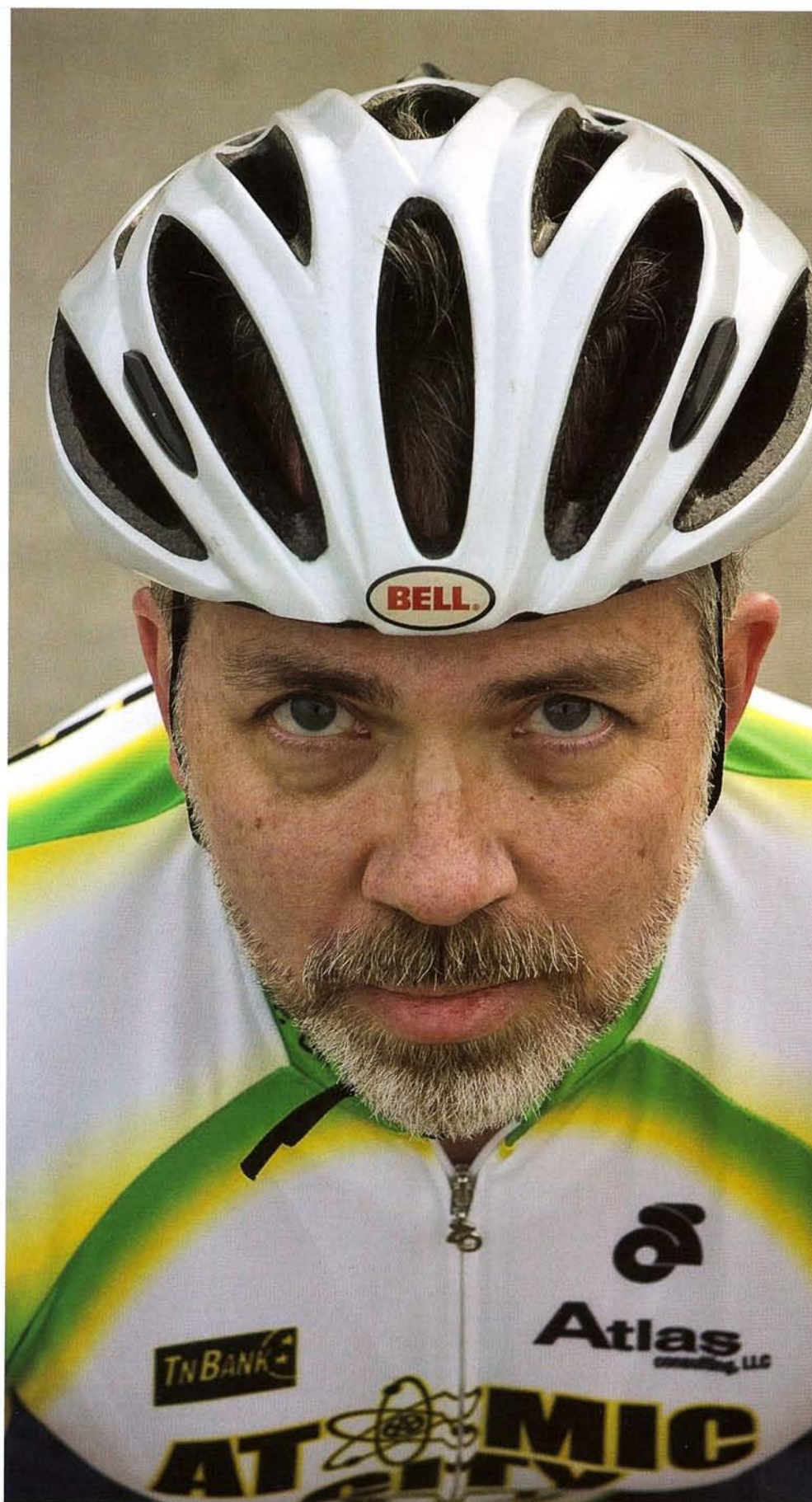
The Wellness Community first contacted Light by letter, offering him a chance to take part in a unique program for cancer survivors. LiveWell: Life Beyond Cancer is a program in which the Wellness Community has partnered with the Lance Armstrong Foundation and is designed to address the overall wellness needs of cancer survivors. Over the last six weeks, a group of 15 cancer survivors met. The program highlights the fact that medical advancements have made cancer survival about much more than just surgery.

"The question is 'what do I do after I survive cancer,'" explains Light. "One of the benefits of the Wellness Community is that they are truly about wellness, and not sickness."

A huge part of Live Well is the group aspect of the program. Participants are involved in the program for a variety of reasons, and for that matter, a variety of cancers, but the common thread amongst them all is that each of them has experienced the trauma of having cancer. The physical and mental strain. The weakness and the depression that come with chemo.

"You share things in this group that a doctor can't tell you," explains Light.

Participants also have access to both physical therapists and nutritionists. The idea isn't to just transition from chemo. The program is a full on assault of your body's overall wellness. The physical, the mental and the nutritional.



**"THE MOMENT YOU HEAR THAT  
DIAGNOSIS, YOUR LIFE CHANGES."**

Cancer is life changing. And the first change is facing the question of how to live with the idea of having the disease.

"The moment you hear that diagnosis, your life changes," says Beth Light, Ben's wife. "It sends you down a different path."

But Light says that it shouldn't take a cancer diagnosis to motivate us to Live Well.

"It's all about taking steps," he says. "I can still remember the first day I could feel the inside of my socks. Some people aren't at a point where riding a bike is even an option," says Light, who is quick to point out a year and half out from chemo, his nerves are still growing back. "For some people, just walking across the room is the option."

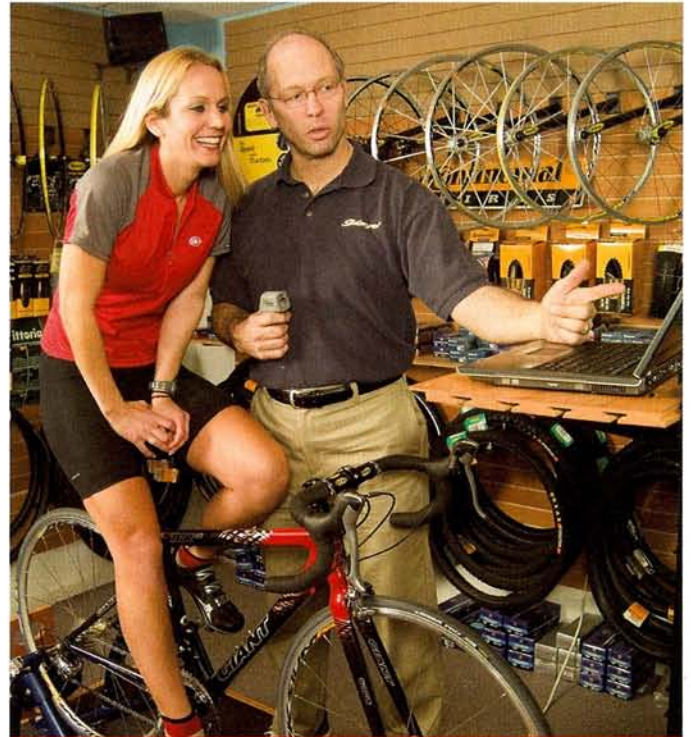
Still, bike riding is such a powerful image of wellness. Thanks in large part to Lance Armstrong, the bicycle has become a symbol for many cancer survivors. During the interview and photo shoot with Ben and Beth Light at West Bicycles for this article, an amazingly and spontaneous dialogue broke out. A man named Clint had overheard the conversation, and wanted to know if Ben would be willing to help Clint's friend, who was currently in treatment for colon cancer. In a matter of seconds, Ben was on the phone with the friend, sharing and encouraging.

The conversation went for another hour, all the while with Ben sharing his convictions. This conversation is what the Live Well program is all about sharing information. Survivors like experiencing an appreciation discussion.

"People always ask what they can do for you," he says. "I tell them to go get screened for cancer."

The program is about spreading the word and learning what the community offers. Live Well makes cancer survival not only a group experience for participants, but also a community experience for anyone fortunate to come in contact with these special survivors. Cancer changes you profoundly but perhaps the most fundamental change is in your mentality. For some, it is a dark and insurmountable experience for others, it's the best motivation they've ever gotten.

"Live Well is all about getting off the couch and getting motivated," says Light. "Whether its yoga, massage therapy, acupuncture or bicycling. Whatever it takes to get your life back."



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