



BUCKET LIST SAFARI

The Silver Lining of
Life-Threatening Illness

Shannon Ansbaugh

Bucket List Safari

Copyright ©2021 by Shannon Ansbaugh

All rights reserved, which includes the right to reproduce this book or portions thereof in any form whatsoever except as provided by the U.S. Copyright Law.

Published by Shannon Ansbaugh

www.thebucketlistsafari.com

STRONGER THAN WE KNOW

“You never know how strong you are until being strong
is the only choice you have.”

Author unknown

When I was young, I thought I was invincible. I was involved in everything. I loved adventure and had a special passion for speed—such as skiing as fast as I could down the slopes of Crystal Mountain, my legs tucked in for extra speed on my short 165-centimeter skis, or wildly navigating the quick twists and turns and snow jumps of boondoggle off-area trails in the forest. I felt fearless as I water-skied the crazy boat wake chop of Mason Lake with my best friend Jessica as we skied in tandem behind their family boat—signaling faster, faster with huge smiles on our faces.

Jessica was my partner in crime. We’d push ourselves, swimming across Mason Lake and back again for extreme exercise. We’d go on adventure mountain biking excursions near Priest Lake while on summer vacation, where one day we spotted a baby bear and decided we better high tail it out of there, singing the Flintstones song as loud as possible to scare off any nearby mama bear.

As kids we played with the other neighborhood kids, crashing through the undeveloped forest behind our houses late into the afternoon with walkie talkies in hand, “Where are you at? Over and out.” “I’m in the far corner of the woods, over and out...”

Then there were Brownies and Girl Scouts. My best buddies Jessica, Kara, and I all joined a troop, and my mom and Jessica's mom were group leaders. We had so much fun going on camping experiences, such as a weeklong horse camp where we learned to ride. On one Girl Scout outing on the Washington coast, a group of us set out for a beach ride.

"Are there any more experienced riders in the group?" our guide asked. We all kind of shrugged and looked around at each other. I volunteered that I had been to horse camp once before.

"Great, we have a more advanced horse for you then," the guide enthusiastically declared. *Okay, I thought.* As we set off to make our way down the beach, my horse quickly decided to make a run for it, beelining down the beach.

"*Whoa!* Slow down!" I tried to reason with the horse, quickly realizing that this horse had a mind of its own and wasn't listening to my commands. The horse broke into an all-out canter. *Whoa! This is a little beyond what we covered at camp!* I thought. I held on for dear life as I violently bounced around in the saddle and pushed with all my strength to keep my feet in the stirrups and not fall off. As the horse sprinted down the beach, I could hear the wind rushing by and the *bdump, bdump, bdump* of pounding hooves. It felt like the sound effects and visuals straight out of the movie, *The Black Stallion*. I saw in the near distance that cars were driving on and off the beach in front of my path. My horse didn't have any fear and I didn't have any control as we bolted straight through the car traffic.

My wild ride finally came to an end when we arrived at a horse stable. The only problem was that it wasn't the right horse stable. I hurriedly got off the horse, happy to be still in one piece, and walked the horse all the rest of the way back to the original stable. On the way back, I passed my mom and her horse, as well as the rest of the troop and their respective horses, each planted firmly in place, horses not budging and refusing to move. Well, my ride certainly wasn't

boring! The ride was exhilarating and terrifying simultaneously.

The neighborhood where I grew up was in the suburbs of Seattle in Federal Way and consisted of mostly 1970s-style larger homes with big yards and wide-open streets lined with mature fir trees and landscaping. The neighborhood was built upon some steeper hills that led down to the water and were called "Marine Hills." There was a strong sense of community among the neighbors and a large number of families with younger kids to play with. The neighborhood even had a private swimming pool and tennis club where we kids spent all summer swimming for the swim team, working at the pool teaching swim lessons, socializing or lap swimming, or going out to eat at social events such as pizza parties or potlucks after our swim meet competitions. Then there were the year-round swim teams that we would participate in at the local community pools during non-summer months.

In the winter, when we were lucky enough to have a heavy snowfall, all of the neighbor kids lined the tops of the nearby hills with their fastest waxed runner sleds and got ready to take on those hills. The adults parked their cars at the tops of the hills, fully out of the way of the sledders, to enable them to get to work in the morning. My dad taught me that we could form a chain with our sleds, where each person put his or her feet into the open steering area of the sled behind them, forming a chain. We'd sled for hours, twisting and turning the sleds to give ourselves a wild ride—especially the last sledder at the end of the chain, getting whipped side to side.

When I was in third grade, my mom and dad took my brother, Sean, and I to Disneyland for spring break. We were ecstatic! We couldn't sleep the night before, as we anticipated going to such a magical faraway place. It was the first time Sean and I would travel outside of the state of Washington. What I remember most is both Sean and I being virtually fearless as we rode roller coaster after roller coaster—the crazier the better! We both had stomachs of steel and couldn't

get enough of the rides. We also took a trip to Knott's Berry Farm in California and rode the Corkscrew ride, screaming with delight as we went up and down. This fascination with amusement park rides continued back home as we enjoyed our local theme park, Enchanted Village, where we delighted going upside down on the Hamster Wheel. We also enjoyed taking a ride on the wild roller coaster at the seasonal Puyallup Fair. Those were the days when we were young and naive about the real challenges of life.

* * *

It was a hot and muggy summer afternoon in 1986, without a cloud in the sky. The thermometer in the kitchen showed almost 80 degrees Fahrenheit outside—very warm by Seattle standards. It seemed as if it would be a carefree summer day. I gave a big hug and kiss to my beloved Standard Poodle, Capri, before getting ready to run out the door.

"Ready, Mom?" I asked anxiously.

"Yes, let's head out now."

I was fourteen years old. I looked at my mom's kind, gentle face as we left the house to go to my annual physical exam. The physical was required so that I could join the high school swim team in the fall. I was feeling hurried because I wanted to get home from the appointment with enough time to rest and prepare for the upcoming swim meet that night. We turned on some radio tunes and made our way through Federal Way to the local SeaTac medical clinic.

As Mom and I sat in the waiting room, waiting for Dr. Jon Almquist, our long-time family pediatrician who we also considered a friend, I studied the friendly-looking colorful giraffe mural on the wall. My thoughts drifted off to my upcoming swim race. *Maybe I can get a personal best time tonight in the fifty-yard breaststroke, I thought. It will be fun to catch up with the other kids, too.* In between races, we

would spread our sleeping bags out on the lawn and play cards and chat.

"Shannon? The doctor is ready for you." A nurse called my name and I rose to follow her to the exam room, accompanied by my mom.

It wasn't long before Dr. Almquist entered with a smile. "Hello, Shannon, good to see you again." I looked at him with a twinkle in my big brown eyes, conveying my carefree attitude and optimistic nature. My huge teenage smile lit up my face and reflected my big heart.

He began my exam, checking to see if he felt any physical abnormalities. Everything went as normal until he felt my neck. He was checking for swollen lymph nodes when I felt him pause. "Hmm," he said. "Your neck seems to feel a bit full on the left side."

My carefree attitude dulled slightly. "Is there a problem?"

The worried furrow between his eyebrows conveyed his concern. "I'd like for you to get a full neck and chest x-ray today," he said. "Have you noticed any changes in weight, energy, or itchiness of skin?"

I thought about it and responded, "Well, I have felt a little more tired than normal. I've also had some problems with itchy skin." *Probably just from the chlorine and sun*, I thought to myself. My anxiety increased at the thought of needing to get x-rays done—not because I thought anything was wrong (I was a kid that rarely got sick), but because I was worried I'd be late for the swim meet that night. This was taking a bit longer than I had expected.

Nevertheless, I had the x-rays taken. As we waited for the results in the exam room, I turned to my mom. "What about the swim meet tonight?" It was now around 4 p.m. and the swim meet warm-up would start at 5 p.m.

Just then, the doctor returned. His jaw was clenched, and his lips were tightly pursed. He sat down in his chair by the desk, as if trying to alleviate the weight of what he had to say. He looked at my mom, rather than me. "The x-ray shows that Shannon's entire chest

and neck has a mass—a tumor of some sort. I feel certain that this is some type of cancer.”

“What? Cancer? Oh my god.” I felt like I’d been punched hard in the gut.

My mind raced as I tried to digest what he had just said. *I am going to die.* I began to cry uncontrollably. *I am only fourteen and I am going to die.*

I couldn’t believe what I was hearing; I thought only older people got cancer. I could hardly breathe, I was crying so hard. I looked at my mom, who looked equally upset. We were in complete shock.

“I just made arrangements for you to meet with a lead surgeon, Dr. David Tapper, at the Seattle Children’s Hospital at 7 p.m. tonight,” Dr. Almquist continued. “It is critical that you meet with him right away so an immediate biopsy of the neck can be scheduled.”

I felt the blood drain from my face and my stomach tightened into a knot. *It can’t be cancer. I am too young! This simply can’t be,* I thought to myself. *I am in the best physical shape of my life. I swim for an hour every day!*

We gathered our things and prepared to go directly to the children’s hospital to meet the surgeon. Dr. Almquist again looked at my mom and said, “Go home and pack a suitcase, and please drive carefully and try not to get into an accident driving to the hospital.” It was obvious that he was also very alarmed and in shock, trying to stay calm.

“Okay,” she answered quietly.

As we left the exam room, Mom called my dad at the University of Washington, where he was attending an executive training class, and left him a message to call her back right away. When he called back, she brought him up to speed on the events of the afternoon. Everything felt surreal, like we were acting out some sort of scene from a terrible nightmare. My dad had planned to meet us at the swim meet that evening, but instead, he made arrangements to come to the

children's hospital.

Sitting in Dr. Tapper's big office within the dimly lit hospital, my eyes were completely red and puffy. I'd been crying since 4 p.m. I had gone from enjoying a sunny afternoon without a care in the world to complete terror in a matter of a few hours.

The hospital was like a ghost town—mostly empty by then, as it was almost 7 p.m. The surgeon came into the room to meet my parents and me in his after hours. He was so nice, with a warm angelic aura about him. As a pediatric surgeon, he had a way with children and a kindness that radiated from within. It became clear to us that Dr. Almquist had used his impeccable reputation and clout to pull many strings to get us this appointment.

"It's OK to be scared," he reassured me as he examined my neck and talked to my parents. He reviewed the x-rays and said that he would be performing a biopsy on my neck the next morning.

He turned to me, "I do not want to use general anesthesia for the procedure tomorrow because of the size of the tumor in your chest. I want to ensure that you don't have any breathing problems during surgery." I had never had surgery before in my life. All of this sounded incredibly daunting. I thought of all my friends at the swim meet. *They must be having so much fun right now.* I couldn't believe where I was, in comparison. I still thought there must have been some kind of mistake. I had never been a sickly kid and had always been in really good physical shape. *How could this happen?!* My mind raced.

My dad talked to my brother Sean late that night to relay the events of the day to him so that he was up to speed on what was happening. He was able to finish out his swim meet and get a ride home with a friend. Sean and I had always been very close. We were only two years apart in age; he was now twelve. We had always been good friends even though we used to beat on each other a bit during our younger years, as most siblings do.

I was told later that Sean had asked my dad, "Is Shannon going to

die?" My dad answered, "I don't know, Sean, but she has really good doctors working with her right now."

The night before surgery, each of us privately prayed that the procedure would go well. Luckily, we were able to go home and sleep in our own beds that night instead of staying at Children's Hospital. We prayed that we would find the strength to get through this crisis and that the news would be better than expected. The next morning, as I was getting set up for surgery and lying on the operating table, Dr. Tapper tried to ease my anxiety.

"Everything will go well," he said. "You're a brave girl." *Am I?* I wondered. I didn't feel so brave. I felt like I didn't have a choice—I had no control over my life anymore. Sean tried to joke around with me as we waited, to lighten up the situation and give me the confidence to not be afraid. My mom and dad were very emotional and teary-eyed, trying to put on brave faces.

Once the procedure began, they draped a cloth over my face so that I would not see everything that was going on. I felt the local anesthesia start to work as my body became tingly and sleepy. There was pressure on my neck, but I didn't feel much in terms of physical pain. Rather, I was emotionally terrified. *Was this really happening?!*

Eventually, I felt an uncomfortable tug on my skin, indicating the surgery was almost done and the surgeon had started to stitch me up. I could feel the thread weaving in and out of my skin. The procedure was a day surgery, so I was cleared to leave afterward. My parents took me home to recover. The next day, the doctors called and confirmed my worst nightmare.

I had cancer.

I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease, a cancer of the lymph nodes. So many thoughts raced through my mind.

Hodgkin's lymphoma? What does that mean?

How did I get this? Has it spread throughout my body?

Am I going to die?

The doctors didn't know why I developed the disease, but there may have been a correlation to my having had a mild case of mono at age five. Perhaps the mono virus, plus Epstein Bar virus (which can cause mono) could have caused it.

The next weeks and months consisted of test after test, blood draws, CAT scans, and meeting after meeting with doctors. I had been diagnosed, but the next phase was staging to determine how far advanced the cancer was. This was an emotionally grueling process of testing and re-testing to determine the extent of the tumor within my body.

I thought of my friends playing outside, enjoying the beautiful sunshine rays of summer. I couldn't believe that my summer vacation now consisted of hospital visit after hospital visit. I hadn't told many of my friends yet that I had cancer. It was hard to say.

I remember the day I had my best friend, Jessica, over to my house and told her, "I have cancer. We don't know how far it has spread yet. I am scared." For a while, we sat in silence, staring at the row of stuffed animals in my bedroom and thinking about all that was happening and what might yet happen.

She tried to cheer me up. "I can let our friends know what is going on if you'd like," she offered.

I said, "Thank you, that would be great. It is still hard for me to talk about this." She understood and was there for me, as she had always been throughout my childhood.

Each doctor we met with had a different perspective on my situation. Many doctors were very clinical and not very optimistic about my prognosis, which didn't help to reassure me or my family that things were going to be OK. Some doctors told my parents that I had an uphill battle ahead of me. Then there were a few standout doctors, like Dr. David Tapper, who was consistently kind and reassuring

and helped me and my family to keep hope.

My parents put on brave faces in front of me, but I knew that they were also terrified. One day, I arrived early with my parents for an appointment at the children's hospital to go through my first computerized tomography (CT) x-ray scan. The CT takes images from all different angles of the body to create a more detailed 3D-like image of the internal body.

The nurse handed me a large thick glass of "barium" to drink. Barium is a contrast agent that coats the inside of the body to provide better imaging. Drinking barium is literally like drinking glue. It had an awful flavor. I winced as the taste and texture of glue went down my throat; I felt like I was going to throw up. There was so much of it to drink! It took several minutes to work my way through the whole glass.

Next, the technicians put an IV in my arm. I started to feel a warm sensation in my veins and a metallic taste in my mouth. Then they had me lay down on a flat table; the table slowly moved me toward a large opening and circular white space in the center of the machine. Once inside the machine, I looked up at the white "tunnel" that I was in with curiosity. It looked like something from outer space. It started to whirl around and around very quickly. There were points where I was told to hold my breath so the technicians could take 1000s of tiny pictures. I imagined in my mind that I was in a faraway place, like the jungles of Costa Rica, where there were monkeys and forest animals making noises all around me. Thinking about this beautiful setting put me at ease so that I could mentally escape from my current reality.

The next step in my treatment was to schedule a laparotomy surgery to remove my spleen and take a sample of my liver and hip bone. This was an important part of staging. In the 1980s, a splenectomy was the standard approach to staging for Hodgkin's lymphoma. The belief was that if the spleen were removed, the body's "powerhouse"

of the lymph system could be shut down. If any cancer was found in the spleen, it had likely spread throughout the entire body through the lymph system. My surgery was scheduled again at the children's hospital, and it was going to be a tough surgery.

The day of my surgery was another beautiful, hot summer day. I had fasted since midnight the night before to prepare for surgery and showered with antibacterial soap. As I sat in my private hospital room awaiting surgery, I thought about my friends and what they were doing right then; they were probably down at the swimming pool. I agonized over the thought of being cut open with a knife and having an organ removed. *How badly will this hurt?* I wondered.

Thankfully, I had visitors and distractions while I waited all day for my surgery. Get well cards and presents were brought to me from family, friends, and the swim team. One toy that I especially loved getting was a gigantic brown teddy bear from our neighbor friends, the Miller family. It was huge and so soft and squishy that it brought a big smile to my face. I hugged it and kept it next to my bed where I could easily see it. There were also beautiful flower arrangements and a sweet computer-generated banner from the swim team that everyone had signed. It brought me huge comfort to know that people were pulling for me.

Since it was August and around the time of Seafair, one of the U.S. Navy Blue Angels came to the hospital to visit the sick kids. It brightened my day to meet the pilot. He was really nice, and I was a bit starstruck by the Navy uniform. I looked up at him in awe, thinking about what it must be like to fly a fighter plane at high speeds over the crowds at Seafair. My mind was temporarily relieved of the imminent surgery. It still felt surreal that I was in the hospital with cancer and about to have major surgery.

After the visit, I was wheeled into the operating room, where I met the surgeon, Dr. Tapper, again and the nurses assisting in the procedure. They explained that after they started administering the anes-

thetic through the IV, I would drift off to sleep and when I'd wake up, the surgery would be over. Sure enough, I was given the anesthetic, and very quickly everything got fuzzy and I drifted into darkness and deep sleep.

The surgery took several hours, and I spent at least an hour in the recovery room coming back to consciousness. Then, I was wheeled into an elevator, where I briefly saw my parents and some of our neighborhood friends. I recognized the concern in their faces even though I was extremely groggy. My parents later told me how hard it was to see me like that; I looked almost yellow. They could tell that the surgery had been difficult.

I fell back asleep after that brief moment of consciousness and didn't remember anything for a long period after that. I woke up in the complete darkness of the children's hospital ward. A curtain was drawn around my bed and it felt like a fire was burning in my abdominal area. I was in more pain then than I'd ever experienced in my entire life. I felt all alone since I couldn't see anyone around me, and I knew that my parents had gone home for the night.

I cried in agony at the incredible pain. The harder I cried, the more it hurt. I felt like my innards had been ripped out of my body. I pressed the little red button on the switch by my bed to get a nurse. The nurse came by and asked, "How are you feeling?" She had a kind, compassionate look on her face.

"I'm in a lot of pain. My body is burning," I told her. She promptly gave me some more painkillers—probably morphine—as an injection in my thigh. I had to lie very still and flat on my back. I could barely move due to the pain. I drifted back off into a restless sleep.

The next morning, I woke up and discovered that I was in the same room, but I could now see around the curtain to know that I was with several other sick kids. One girl was recovering from heart surgery. Another girl was recovering from a staph infection in her leg. Then there was me, the girl fighting cancer, and a couple of other sick kids.

I couldn't talk to any of them, as we were spread out and partially separated by curtains, but it made me feel better to know I wasn't alone. This was the wing of the hospital where I was going to spend the next week recovering.

I learned that the surgery had gone well. The surgeon had had to make a rather long vertical incision instead of the usual horizontal incision to remove my spleen because I was so muscular from all of the swimming. We learned that there was no cancer found in the spleen. I was ecstatic with that part of the news; however, I was still really scared as we didn't know the extent of the cancer. Was it all above the waist or had it spread elsewhere in my body?

The next day, the nurse came by to give me more pain medication and to help me go to the bathroom. "How are you feeling today? What is your pain level?" she asked.

"I'm still feeling a lot of pain and discomfort. I also have to go to the bathroom. How am I going to do that?"

"Okay, let me first help you with the bathroom. We can use what is called a 'bedpan.' I can just hold the pan under you in your bed while you go to the bathroom. That way you don't have to get out of bed."

Using a bedpan felt so undignified. I was in so much pain, though, that I decided I didn't care what I looked like. I was just relieved to be more comfortable again.

"I'm going to give you another pain injection now," the nurse told me. I was grateful to know that relief was coming. I was still receiving glucose via my IV for food and liquids. I was really uncomfortable; my back and body hurt so much from lying in the same position for so long.

Later that day, when the nurse said that I had to try to stand up, I thought to myself, *No! I really don't want to do this.* I was still in excruciating pain. As I stood up, I could feel a wave of fire rage through the core of my body. *God, this hurts!* I thought. But I knew I had to start moving around again. I now had to walk to the bathroom and

wheel my IV with me wherever I went. Meanwhile, I got a sponge bath and continued to get pain shots in my thigh.

My mom, dad, and brother came to see me each day. I was so grateful for the company. They immediately made me feel more at ease. My aunts and uncles came, as did my grandparents. I received many beautiful flower arrangements and a lot of cute stuffed animals and nice gifts. My grandparents had given me a very pretty floral nightgown and robe before surgery, so I wore that each day instead of the hospital gown.

My friend Jessica came, as did other friends from the neighborhood. It was nice getting to hang out with my friends, trying to feel like a normal kid again. I liked catching up and hearing about the latest events going on at home.

For the next few days, I established a routine. I'd walk laps with my parents around that floor of the hospital, with my IV on wheels in tow. I'd also get a daily injection of pain medication. One day, I was mentally preparing for my daily pain shot when, upon injection, the needle shot back out of my leg and hit the ceiling!

"Oh my gosh, what happened?!" I asked. My parents and I looked on in horror. The nurse looked a bit flustered and said, "It looks like I hit a muscle when administering the injection. I'm really sorry." I lost feeling in my thigh for about a year after that happened.

Finally, at the end of the week, my family helped me pack up my belongings and get dressed for the first time. I was going home. By then, I had lost about ten pounds and was feeling very weak, but I was so happy to go home. I looked forward to my own bed, seeing my dog Capri, and moving on to the next phase of my treatment and my life.

* * *

Even though I was now at home, the next few weeks consisted of

more doctor appointments. I was going to need a lymphangiogram done next. I thought, *OK, what is that?*

My mom and I walked in for my appointment in Seattle. The doctor's office was in a little complex right across from "31 Flavors" (Baskin-Robbins) ice cream shop near the University of Washington. We entered a dimly lit room; the sunlight outside was immediately gone. The office was cold, and I sat on a metal table next to a chair where my mom took a seat.

"Are you able to lie flat on the table on your back?" The technician asked.

"Sure," I said as I awkwardly moved to get into position. I was still sore from my previous surgery. The technician explained that this was a procedure that would make incisions on the tops of both my feet where tubes would be inserted and dye would be pumped throughout my whole body. This would be done to illuminate the lymph nodes so that x-ray pictures could determine the extent to which cancer had spread through my lymph system. I felt as if I was part of some experimental research project. *This must be what lab rats feel like*, I considered.

The doctor took a very long needle and injected an enormous amount of Novocain into the top of my foot. *Ouch! This hurts like a mother!*

I looked down to see what the hell was happening and saw that there was a bubble the size of an egg on top of my foot. It was the Novocain pain killer. It burned like fire. The same thing was done to the other foot. I tried not to move and squirm with pain.

My mom and I looked on in horror. The next step was for the doctor to make an inch-long incision on the top of each foot and insert the tubes. Talk about uncomfortable! I felt like I was being subjected to some sort of bizarre torture ritual. The rest of the day I laid flat on the table so that the dye could make its way throughout my body. Finally, the day was over and we closed it off with some x-rays. Leaving

the office, I could barely walk. I never realized how thin and bony my feet were and how much the skin stretches as I walk. The incisions hurt for months to come. I was still recovering from the splenectomy, as well.

I felt so much uncertainty about what my future held. We didn't know how far the cancer had spread, and the waiting was agony. The doctors explained that for the rest of my life I'd have to take antibiotics any time I developed a fever of 101 degrees or greater since my spleen had been removed. The spleen is the organ responsible for fighting bacterial infections; I'd always be at greater risk for infections going forward, so I had to take precautions.

From that point forward, I no longer felt like a child. My naivety about life and my sense of invincibility was gone forever. It felt like I had been through battle. My cancer diagnosis was just the beginning of a very long journey that would change my life forever. But, I was a fighter and knew in my heart that I'd do everything in my power to beat cancer.

Life Lesson: We are stronger than we can ever know.

Can a life-threatening illness or medical emergency give you the courage to go after your big life dreams?

Bucket List Safari takes an honest, sensitive, and humorous approach to detailing one woman's journey of navigating lifelong issues of cancer survivorship. After much adversity, instead of wallowing in fear of another health emergency, Shannon turned instead to achieving her dreams—by writing and fulfilling her bucket list!

The author takes the reader along on epic travel adventures she might not have dared to try had her life gone according to “plan.”

Some of her bucket list adventures include:

- Going on an African safari
- Taking a surfing lesson
- Hiking the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest to meet mountain gorillas in the wild
- Riding a camel in the Sahara Desert
- Taking a nature cruise through the Galapagos

The unexpected twists and turns of life can give us the courage we need to break out of our comfort zones and intentionally redefine our lives. This book will make you want to dig out your old bucket list—or write one for the first time.



Shannon lives in Seattle, Washington with her husband, Jeff, her black lab, Rio, and her black kitten, Josie. She enjoys hanging out with friends and family, trying out new local restaurants, getting outdoors, and learning to paint. When she's not pursuing the items on her bucket list, she's busy supporting non-profits such as Children's Hospital in Seattle and Woodland Park Zoo.

