

DIAGNOSIS: LIFE

Alan Gurvey was given a second chance, and it's been carpe diem ever since

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by [As told to Trevor Kupfer](#)

Alan Gurvey's life changed forever after a three-week period in 2011.

I played softball that night, got home, and started experiencing some incredible pain. I'm pretty good at pain—I was an athlete and played football, so my tolerance is pretty good—but this was overwhelming. It became so excruciating I went to my neighbor, DJ Ashba, who was in Guns N' Roses, and he and his buddy called an ambulance. I got to the hospital expecting a diagnosis of kidney stones. They put me on pain medication right away. This was about midnight. They called a urologist friend of mine who lives in Santa Barbara, and he came down. I was like, "Why is he here for a kidney stone?" They said, "Well, we did an MRI and CAT scan and it looks like you have a tumor on your kidney the size of a softball."

I was not in any condition to have surgery done; they said I was too weak because I had lost so much blood. They did a number of small surgical procedures, including four blood transfusions, to get me healthy enough, but they were leery about my prognosis. My family came in from Canada.

I was going to have surgery on Monday, and the Friday before they took an MRI. On Sunday the doctor called me and said, "I have bad news. It looks like everything has spread. We see spots everywhere in your upper torso." The next day I was scheduled for surgery. I got up early and was walking around with all of my IVs, listening to music to get pumped up, and convincing myself that everything was going to be OK. I remember hearing "Wake Me Up When September Ends" by Green Day, and this was Sept. 19, and I just wanted to be asleep for those 11 days. I was doing every trick I could to get myself in the right frame of mind.

In the meantime I decided to ask my girlfriend to marry me. I had a ring made, and my office manager brought it to the hospital. The surgery was at 11 o'clock, so at 10:15 I got off the gurney—I was all hooked up—and got on one knee and proposed. Everyone jokes and says, "Of course she said yes. Who's gonna say no to the guy about to go into surgery?"

The surgeon was running late, so they held off [anesthesia] a little. A half-hour later, he ran in—he was literally running—and said, "Stop! Don't put that man under!" Everyone is like, "What?!" He says, "Over the weekend, I went to another radiologist—something didn't add up—and I wanted her to review the films. And she's saying it's not a tumor; it's a hematoma—a massive ball of blood—and all the spots are particles of blood that had broken off the hematoma. ... This was all a mistake." Everyone started cheering, there were high-fives, people were hugging each other, people were crying. The anesthesiologist said, "In my 30 years, I've never seen anything like this."

I was just stunned. I started ripping the IVs out of my arm, jumped off the table, and said, "Take me home." I'd been in the hospital three weeks at that point. I called everyone, went and had some lunch, and decided I was going to make every minute special. I was given a second chance. And I felt guilty. Why can't more people get this kind of good news? Why am I the one getting this miraculous news?

I had a trip planned to Uganda. I had secured a license to track mountain gorillas a year-and-a-half earlier. It was in Bwindi national forest, for this endangered species, and it was very difficult. The date I was given was about a month and a half after all this happened, and the doctors said, "You can't go." I said, "Watch me." I just gritted my teeth and did what I had to do to stay with the group. It took about a week—an 18-hour flight experience, a week of hiking and driving over mountains, another day of tracking them—all for about one hour with the gorillas. But we found them. In fact, at one point, one of the gorillas brushed by my leg.

Five months after Sept. 19—which was my fiancé's birthday—we got married. The following December we had our first child.

A lot of people came to me and said, "You need to sue." My answer was simple: I am very lucky, very fortunate, and what went through my mind during that period was difficult and I wouldn't want anyone to have to face that. But I was ready to move on. I didn't consider it for even 20 seconds.

I still don't know [how the hematoma] happened, but I was up to bat that night, and the first basemen showed me no respect. He played up, and I'm a left-handed hitter, and my competitive nature made me swing as hard as I could to slam it down his throat. The theory was I swung so hard that maybe a rib lacerated my kidney, causing the blood flow. I did rip it past him, but if that caused what ensued for the next three to four weeks, I probably shouldn't be that competitive.

Gurvey is also behind the mic for his legal-based radio show, *Gurvey's Law*. Here are his thoughts on some memorable guests

F. Lee Bailey maintained that O.J. Simpson did not murder Nicole Brown and Ronald Goldman. Interestingly, he said that there was dissension within the "Dream Team." He further stated that Robert Shapiro had tried to broker a plea agreement, and, when the verdict was announced, Mr. Shapiro was shocked and left the courtroom very quickly. Mr. Bailey also spoke about trial techniques saying, "If a witness is uncomfortable, you will see it first in their eyes, then perhaps later in their voice, but you need to know when to pounce, when the witness is vulnerable. You get it first from their eyes."

The main thrust of what **Gerry Spence** said was that everyone needs to treat people as "human beings," not clients, not judges, not juries and not prosecutors. Time and time again during the interview he came back to the notion of "humanity" and said if you can master understanding humanity, you can be a great lawyer.

We've had **Alan Dershowitz** on our program a couple of times. Just speaking about his upbringing, his parents, his struggles with school when he was a kid, turned out to be wholly engrossing.

John Henry Browne is an attorney who you just want to be friends with. There was no hyperbole or rhetoric, just an attorney who has represented some of the worst villains in our society. He lamented about how Ted Bundy, his client, told him that the two of them were very similar.

I asked **Gloria Allred**, "Some people would say you are a media whore; how do you respond?" Her response was simple and to the point: "People can call me whatever they want to call me. My objective is to bring a voice to those who don't have a voice. If I can be their voice, whether it's in the media or otherwise, I will always do that."

Bert Fields said to me before we went on-air, "Alan, I am an open book, you can ask me anything and I will answer." The interview went well, but Fields did balk when I asked him about his representation of Donald Trump. After the interview, he apologized: "I know that I said I was an open book, you could ask me anything, but there were a few issues about Donald Trump, who I represented many years ago, which I didn't feel comfortable talking about."



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Alan Gurvey