



Luck continued from // BA10

But he's not yet prepared to consider himself one of the lucky ones.

"I never think about it that way," he said. "The five years is almost up and if I get through this next CAT scan and there's nothing else, then maybe I'll look back and say 'Hey, you were one of the lucky ones.'

"But it's always in your mind that it could come back," he added.

"You've always got that apprehension."

MORE THAN 26,000 people in Hamilton were diagnosed with cancer between 2000 and 2009 and Janice McFadyen was one of them.

Steve Rudaniecki was another.

"Do I remember the day they told me I have cancer? Oh yeah, no problem," he said, before breaking into a hearty laugh. "It was my birthday.

"I went into the doctor's office and he said 'The bad news is you have leukemia.' Well, happy birthday to me, I said. It's a day I'll never forget."

That was 10 years ago, April 29, 2003, the day Rudaniecki turned 51. Chronic lymphocytic leukemia. Stage IV.

"That's as far as you go," he said. "They told me right from the get-go I was in an advanced stage.

"I knew leukemia was a death sentence."

The prognosis for him back then? He had one to five years left, depending on how fast it progressed.

So far, he's made it to 10.

"My wife is tormented with this daily," said Rudaniecki, who lives in Hamilton's industrial North End.

"I don't know who's affected more — her or me. You wonder sometimes is tomorrow the day?"

Like Janice, he too was told that he'd reached the end.

Last November, Rudaniecki's doctor told him his leukemia had become resistant to the different chemotherapy treatments that had been tried over the years.

He was given three months to a year left to live. His wife, Susi, started checking out funeral homes.

"How many years have I got? I don't know," he sighed. "So I've got to make use of every day

'I knew leukemia was a death sentence.'

STEVE RUDANIECKI
LEUKEMIA SURVIVOR

that comes by.

"If I wake up, I've got another day, thanks Lord. I'm not a religious guy by any means but somebody's doing something for me."

It's a sunny summer morning and Rudaniecki is sitting at the kitchen table in the house he shares with Susi on Caroline Street North in Hamilton.

It's the same house he lived in

as a child.

For 16 years, he worked at the old Rheem factory on Barton Street, just a few doors away. He started there in 1971 for \$3.67 an hour "and all the overtime you could eat," he said.

"I'd sit here and listen for the warning whistle and say 'Oops, time to go to work,'" said Rudaniecki.

"I'd run out the door and down the street and punch in before 7 o'clock. I could come home for lunch."

Rudaniecki ticks off a number of the same risk boxes as Janice. He lived much of his life in the inner core, he was a smoker and he, too, has been surviving on disability payments because of his long fight with cancer.

Pains continues // BA12



PHOTOS BY JOHN RENNINGER, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Steve Rudaniecki became resistant to several different chemotherapies.

PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE AGED 25-64 WITH NO HIGH SCHOOL OR POST-SECONDARY DIPLOMA

