

Membership Has Its Privileges

By Matt Collins

As you may or may not know, I met a young lady at the Buckeye Miata Club Christmas Dinner in December of 1999. At that time, I was just finishing my divorce and didn't have any desire to start a new relationship. Well, over the past few years, if you have had the honor of meeting **Lynn Stanberry**, then you know that I didn't have a chance in Hell of not falling for her.

At that time, **Lynn** was in need of winter tires for her new Miata. She had recently moved here from Colorado and, having never owned a Miata, and even more so, having never driven one here in the snow, she asked if I could recommend tires. It just happened that I knew someone who had winter tires for sale, and to make a long story short, I made arrangements to pick up the tires and have them mounted. I asked **Lynn** to come over the following week and I would put them on her car. She did bring her car over as well as dinner. I installed her tires and we ate dinner and, afterwards, we talked for hours. A week later, we talked on the phone, and one thing led to another, and the rest, as they say, is history.

I am not intending to write a love story (even though I guess that's what it really is). As many of you know, Lyn was diagnosed with breast cancer in the late 1980's. Yes, the late '80's! For many years she has fought the disease and she has continued to fight like a heavy-weight champion. Over the years this ugly disease has sprouted its ugly head many times. I can only share with you first-hand what *I've* seen over the past few years **Lynn** and I have been together. **Lynn** was very upfront with me and shared the information about her illness after we had known each other for a short time.

When we first met **Lynn** was living in Pickerington with a couple she had met through her work as a loan officer. For one reason or another (no one can figure out why exactly), as **Lynn** returned home from a long weekend with me, she found that she had been locked out of their house and her garage door opener had been removed from her car. What made

this a nightmare was that it was probably the worst snow storm in recent years, late at night, and I was living at Reed and Henderson Roads at that time. I suggested that she drive back to my home where she could stay until we could figure out something. The part that really sucked was that **Lynn** was taking chemo treatments every week at that time. Chemo would kill not only the cancer, but also a lot of good things in a person's body.

In March of 2000, we finally received great news. The cancer was defeated and **Lynn's** life started to make a turn for the better. As I mentioned, **Lynn** was a member of the Buckeye Miata Club. While still in chemo, **Lynn** attended the 1999 OVR Awards Banquet with me, which was her first introduction to this large family of car nuts.

In May of 2000, she became a member of the Ohio Valley Region of the Sports Car Club of America. That year, **Lynn** had the time of her life. She started autocrossing my 1992 Miata in C-Street Prepared Ladies class with both clubs – OVR and Buckeye Miata Club ("BMC"). She finished second in the BMC series and took the championship with OVR/SCCA. What a year that was! Oh, I finished *second*. Boy, did I get ribbed about *that!* At her second OVR banquet, she got the trophy for driving *my* car (okay, I'm done *whining*).

In the winter of 2001, we were starting to discuss autocrossing in both series and ordered new tires for the year. **Lynn** was ready to defend her championship and, after taking some pointers from **Cheenie Kinney**, her goal was to beat me in my car. **Cheenie** asked her if she ever hit cones, and when **Lynn** replied "no", **Cheenie** told her to *start* hitting them. At that point, I must admit, I was a little concerned that she *would*, at some point that season, beat my times.

Unfortunately we have not had the opportunity. In late June of 2001, **Lynn** was starting to have some pain in her hip. We were told that the cancer had gone to her bones, and that's why her hip was giving her problems. She immediately stopped racing, and I followed shortly after.

Before that news, **Lynn** believed that she would have five years without the cancer being an issue. If you know her very well, you know

the way she deals with this disease. She goes through 24 hours of being mad, and 24 hours of being sad, and the, *she's back!* I have seen her do this for the time we have been together. Over the past year, **Lynn** has been on a few different treatments, and it seems like the doctors could not find the right combination of drugs to win the battle with the cancer.

On July 19th of this year, we had a doctor's appointment with **Lynn's** oncologist. She changed **Lynn's** meds once again and asked me to call her with *any* changes (good *or* bad) that I noticed over the weekend. On Sunday, I was at my parent's home, and since **Lynn** wasn't there, I could call the doctor to let her know what I had noticed thus far over the weekend. (You need to understand that **Lynn** doesn't complain, and this is why I called when I was away from our house).

After sharing with her doctor what I had observed that weekend, I asked the question that I had *never* asked of either **Lynn** *or* her doctor (by the way, this doctor *does* have a name, **Leslie Laufman**). "Is it bad?" I asked. She replied, "yes." and then I asked her "how bad is it?". Her reply, "if it has gone to her liver like I believe, it's *real*/bad." I then asked, "are you telling me that I need to get her daughter here from California," and she replied, "yes, real soon." What a lousy time to ask that question. Right?

From that point on, my life has changed once again. I immediately called **Steve** and **Linda Johnson** (seeing **Linda** has this ugly disease, as well), who are very close friends, because I needed to talk with someone that minute. We talked for a while, and one of the things that we all agreed on was that **Lynn** and I had always talked about going to Niagara Falls together, and *now* was the time to do this.

I called and got reservations at the Day's Inn in Niagara on the Canadian side, I also typed an email and sent it to three wonderful people in our life; **Linda Johnson**, **Lynda Cooper** from BMC, and **Kirsten Dell** from OVR/SCCA. In this email, I asked them to help me throw a surprise party for **Lynn** on the following Saturday night.

Well, let's go back to the *first* miracle of that week. After driving six hours to Niagara Falls, we pulled up in front of The Days Inn. Because

Lynn was having a real difficult time walking, I left her in the car while I checked us in. One of the first things I did was to request a wheelchair for **Lynn**. The young lady at the front desk said the motel did not have one, so she started calling around to find one for us. It was 6:30 p.m., and every place she called was closed.

At this point, I became very frustrated and little mad, as well. The young lady then disappeared to the manager's office for what seemed like an eternity to me. Finally, **Lynn**, out of frustration *and* the calling of Mother Nature, appeared in the lobby. The room the motel had for us was the furthest from the elevators, which would have proven to be a great challenge for **Lynn**. Even with that, **Lynn** said for us to go to the room and we would deal with it.

As we entering the elevator, the manager came out and told us that she was very sorry, and that she had made a call, and for the same rate we were paying them, we were to go to the Renaissance Hotel and ask for the front desk manager. Remember the name, **Madhav Sehgal**. **Madhav** was the front desk manager. When the gal at Days Inn was telling us to go to this other hotel, I did not have any idea at that time just how *nice* The Renaissance was. It was nothing but first class, but could have been a real dump. Having **Madhav** there was what really made this a first class hotel.

As I was checking in, I asked him if he could possibly, *somehow*, find us a wheelchair. He immediately responded, "Mr. Collins, I already have one over here for you." At that point, I became very emotional. Remember, over the last few days I had learned that the love of my life was very sick and I might be losing her to this disease; we had just driven for six hours, and, then there was no wheelchair!

Madhav then asked, "if you don't mind me asking, what is the reason you need the wheelchair?" I gave him the *Reader's Digest* condensed version and, from that point on, **Lynn** was treated like royalty. He started to put us in a room, then he did something on the computer and said, "Mr. Collins, not only am I putting you in our finest room, but it has the best view of the falls in Niagara."

Then, not only did the bellman *and* the concierge take us to our room on the *top floor* (18th), but **Madhav** escorted us to the room, as well. What a view! The very first thing **Lynn** noticed as she was wheeled into the room was the bathroom. In the bathroom was a whirlpool tub that was almost big enough to swim laps. In no time flat, she was in the tub relaxing.

Later that evening, it was time to get some dinner. We went to the lobby to ask them to recommend a place for seafood. **Madhav** immediately picked up the phone and started calling to get us a reservation, but it being 9:15 on a Wednesday night, he was having no success. *He* was starting to get very upset, feeling like *he* was letting *us* down. He then suggested that we try *their* restaurant (which just happened to be on the 18th floor, just three doors down from our room). **Lynn** said that would be fine, so he called up to them know we were coming.

Now, how he got there before we did, I have not figured out, but when we arrived, he was already speaking with the maître'd and the waitress. We had a table in the southwest corner of the dining room that had a view of the Falls that was absolutely breathtaking. The food and service were that expected by royalty.

The following morning, **Lynn** and I were trying to figure out how we were going to get her down to see the Falls. If you have ever been to the Canadian side, you know there is one heck of a hill you have to go down, but even worse, you have to come back *up*. **Madhav** told me he had arranged for us to have a later check-out and had a taxi to take us down with the wheelchair.

I am sharing this with you for two reasons: one, to share with you the way God took over and made things happen for us; and, secondly, if you ever go to Niagara Falls, stop by to say hi to **Madhav** and let him know how *great* fellow BMC and OVR members think he is, and give him a hug. Oh, and I would also recommend *you* stay at this hotel as well.

As I mentioned above, I sent an email to three wonderful people, **Linda, Lynda, and Kirsten**. I'm not going to rewrite the entire letter

here, but it basically asked for their assistance in putting a surprise party together for that Saturday night (keep in mind, this was on Tuesday, *before* we left for Niagara Falls). What I wanted to do was to have a party celebrating **Lynn's** *life*.

And did we ever! With only a week's notice, somewhere between 70 and 80 people showed up at our home at 7:00 p.m. The way we were able to pull this off was that **Lynn's** best friend, **Brenda Vansyck**, had come into town to see her. **Linda Johnson** had called and left a message that she and her husband, **Steve**, were going to bring us dinner that night.

The message went something like this, "hi guys, **Steve** and I are going to bring dinner over tomorrow around 6:30 to 6:45, call us to confirm you got this message, but don't even try to talk us out of it, because we will be coming anyway." If you know **Linda**, you know not to get into an argument with her. I guess that's why she is the *best* president of BMC that I've known.

On the other side of town, **Lynda Cooper** had made arrangements for all of our dear friends to meet at one location close to our home so everyone could pull up at one time. The only problem was that **Lynn** would not go out to see the wheelchair **Steve** and **Linda** had brought over for us to use until we were able to get our own. (See, that was how we planned to get **Lynn** outside so she could see this sea of cars pull into our neighborhood.)

Well, luckily, **Linda** was sitting by the front window and, when she saw the parade come by, she started saying, "look, there is someone driving by in a Miata... wow there comes *another* Miata," and at that time, **Lynn** started looking out at the Miatas. After about seven of them drove by, **Tom Graham** pulled up out in front of the house and parked. That finally gave **Lynn** the idea that *something* was going on, and she then asked to go outside to see.

Steve and I loaded her up into the wheelchair and took her out to the driveway. What a sight! People converged on our home from all directions. The look on **Lynn's** face was *priceless*. Her friend **Brenda**

looked at me with tears pouring from her eyes and said, "I can't stand this," and returned to the house.

I'm telling you, within five minutes, this group had tables and chairs set up in our back yard with so *many* types of food. Wow! It was amazing! The first thing out of **Lynn's** mouth on Sunday morning after the part was, "last night", then a long pause, then "awesome!" And that's *exactly* what it was.

Lynn was very fortunate about two years ago to become a member of a great support group called The Bosom Buddies (a *great* group of women), as well as a member of the Buckeye Miata Club, *and* OVR/SCCA. That's why I can say, **Membership Does Have Its Privileges.**

Oh, by the way, at the time I'm writing this article, **Lynn** has received two units of blood, has seen the doctor three times, and she has shown some improvement. She's **Lynn**, and she has fought this ugly disease since the 1980's. What keeps her going is her faith in God, and knowing that, *someday*, scientists *will* find a cure, and she wants to be around for that. Plus, she's just plain *stubborn!*

I would like to thank each and every one of you who have been able to show **Lynn** how much she means to you. Thanks again, and may God bless you.

Matt