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NBC News' Tom Brokaw opens up about his cancer fight and how it affected his life, family, and sense of mortality, saying "it never occurred to me that I would die."

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Transcript
Fighting Cancer- Tom Brokaw’s Battle Against Multiple Myeloma
LESTER HOLT, anchor:
We're back now with a story about one of our own, Tom Brokaw. Of all the stories Tom has covered over the years, the most personal has to be his own battle with cancer--multiple myeloma, a rare form of blood cancer. Tom's doing much better now. The cancer is in remission and he's written a book about it, A Lucky Life Interrupted; talking openly for the first time about what he went through, what he learned, and above all, how essential his family has been. He talked about it with our National Correspondent Kate Snow.
KATE SNOW, reporting:
How are you feeling?
TOM BROKAW: I'm-- I'm actually feeling pretty good. I'm in remission. I have some back issues that I'm not happy with and I had four compression fractures in my spine. They were repaired, but it cost me two inches of height, so it really attacked my vanity.
SNOW: How tall are you now?
BROKAW: I'm now 5’ 9” I was-- I played high school basketball at six feet, then I went to a 5’ 11” in my 50’s, and bang, I went down to 5’ 9”. Tough.
SNOW: In the halls of NBC, Tom has a nickname, Duncan the Wonder Horse.
BROKAW: And live from the Berlin Wall on the most historic-- You went back and survived the war.
SNOW: Hardworking, tenacious and lucky in life, charmed even, and then about two years ago, a nagging back pain turned out to be much more.
BROKAW: The hematologist looked at me and said you've got a malignancy. It's called multiple myeloma. I said how long? And he said statistically, five years but I think we can probably beat that. We're making a lot of progress in this cancer.
KATE SNOW: Did you think you might die?
BROKAW: It never occurred to me that I would die. That's a conced of an anchorman, you know, that we'll live forever, I suppose.
SNOW: So much confidence, he thought he could pick up where he left off at his Montana ranch. BROKAW: Got up the next morning, did a really dumb thing, I went fishing. SNOW: He ended up being medevaced down bumpy roads, flown back to the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota. Tom's daughter Jennifer is an ER doctor in San Francisco. She became the coordinator of his care. BROKAW: Part of the reason I wrote this book is that it was not about poor Tom, he has cancer. I really wanted to offer some advice to families that are going through this and about what I learned. One is get somebody who's a friend of yours, who's a physician, who can interpret what they're saying. SNOW: He also learned that cancer affects the whole family--his wife of more than 50 years, Meredith, his three daughters, and five grandkids. BROKAW: This experience, they said to me, brought them even closer together. But what they realized is that I'm not going to be around forever. I do think that all of us objectively understand that we are approaching the end of our lives. But subjectively, it's really hard to come to grips with. SNOW: Tom's daughter Sarah worried that her son Archer, Tom's only grandson, wouldn't get enough time with his grandfather. SARAH BROKAW: I thought, you only had six months with him. I want to vision you playing baseball with him and fly fishing and not knowing that was ever going to happen. BROKAW: We've got a kind of a pact that we're going to do that, you know, I already had him out in the dock, showing him about fly rods and everything. He's learning how to crank a reel, so we're going to get there. SNOW: You're going to be around? BROKAW: I'm going to be around. I'm-- you know, my last line of the book is, "Life, what next? Bring it on." That's how I feel. Kate Snow, NBC News, New York. HOLT: And Tom will have much more tonight in the special hour of Dateline at 10, nine Central.