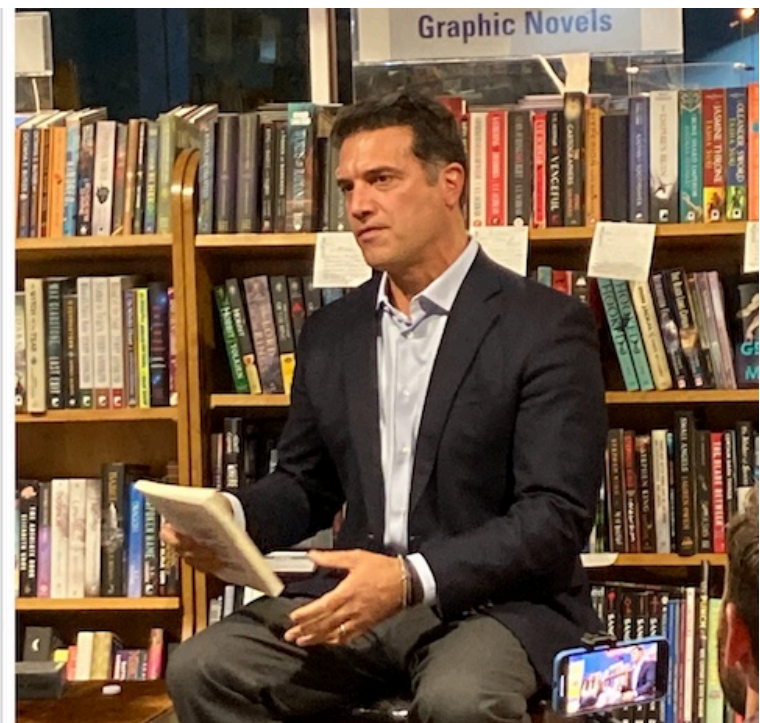
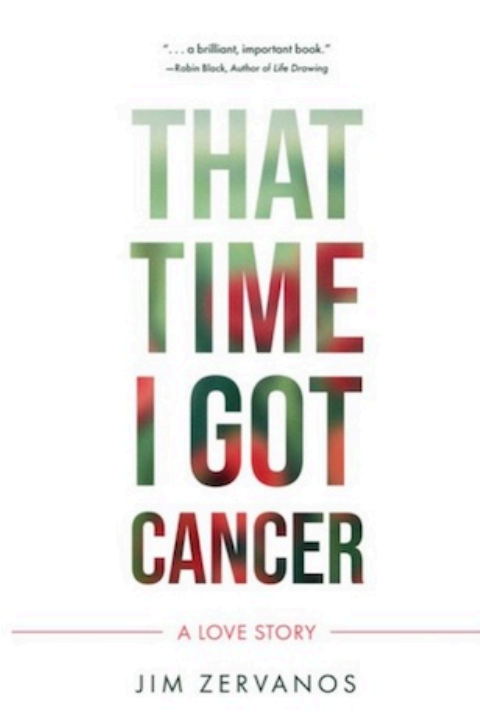


For loved ones facing life-threatening illness and medical pros who care for them... *That Time I Got Cancer: A Love Story*



**Bala Cynwyd's Jim Zervanos at his Nov. 22 book launch at Main Point Books in Wayne.**

**Sounds like a downer but Bala Cynwyd author Jim Zervanos' new memoir is actually a great read:** a suspenseful, bravely honest and ultimately hopeful account of his battle with a disease that stumped Penn Medicine's brightest minds and strained his marriage. The

story was sharpened by Devon's master of memoir, Beth Kephart, so you know the words sing and the narrative sails along.

Here's an abridged/edited version of our Q-and-A with Zervanos about *That Time I Got Cancer*:

**Was it hard for you to be so brutally honest in the book? Did it take a lot out of you?**

I didn't write a word until I felt healthy and fully recovered – a year after the illness struck and six months after I'd finished chemotherapy. At first, it felt presumptuous to think there was an audience for this story so I was motivated by practical concerns, to document the clinical story, for my own record and safekeeping. But it wasn't long before the whole story came rushing out of me and it was cathartic. I remember writing for hours at a time and at a pace that my fingers could hardly keep up with, sometimes with tears streaming down my cheeks.

**Did the book damage, challenge or improve your relationships with the “characters” in it: your parents and your wife, Vana?**

It was hard for them to read the earliest drafts, if only because it meant revisiting painful memories, but as time passed and I took in their feedback and kept revising,

they began to see the book, as I did, as a story that others might find enjoyable and even encouraging.

There are parts that were hard for my parents to read – especially for my father, who, as a doctor had often felt helpless in those weeks when a diagnosis was elusive and it seemed my life would be taken by an illness that would never be understood. But they never asked me to cut a word.

Vana appreciates, as I do, that we are not alone as a married couple who faced a traumatic experience and, at least for a time, grew apart, or at least separately, not necessarily realizing this fact until we discovered ourselves on diverging paths ... It's a myth that couples who suffer through a traumatic time together necessarily grow closer, that intimacy deepens in direct proportion to the depth of the pain of the shared experience. What saved us was realizing that we hadn't actually shared the same experience; we'd had the opposite experience.

**Fine artist, award-winning author and Little League coach Jim Zervanos has been teaching English at Penncrest High School for 28 years. His wife, Vana, is the Associate Dean of the business school at St. Joe's, and his sons attend Lower Merion Schools. He's the author of the novel, *LOVE Park* (also set in Philly) and a second memoir, *Your Story Starts Here: A***

***Year on the Brink with Generation Z (spring 2024)*** about his life as a teacher of high-school seniors. Also in the works: ***American Gyro***, about a Greek-American kid who leaves his small-town restaurant family to go to New York to become an actor just before 9/11.

**That Time I Got Cancer** is sold at local bookstores and on [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), and [Indiebound.org](#).