



All through the summer of 2010, my six-year-old Labrador Rogan wouldn't leave me alone: he'd paw me and stare at me, and wouldn't let me out of his sight. Every time I sat down he'd be there, wanting to sit on my lap. It was so out of character, I wondered if he was ill or had been frightened by something, but really I just found it irritating. He certainly wasn't behaving like this around my husband, Dave.

It didn't occur to me that he was trying to draw my attention to something he knew was wrong. That October, I went for a routine mammogram and they found a shadow on my breast, which turned out to be right-sided triple-negative breast cancer, which had spread to my lymph glands. I had no symptoms, but was told I was very lucky – six months earlier nothing would have shown up, six months later I would have been dead.

The specialist at my local hospital in Guernsey wanted to give me a mastectomy straight away, but I was advised to get a second opinion at the Royal Marsden Hospital in London. The specialist there, Professor Ian Smith, asked if I had a dog and if he had been behaving differently recently. Strange question I thought, but I explained about Rogan's clingy behaviour. 'Yup, he knew,' the professor said.

I was a little taken aback by this, but Professor Smith said he'd heard anecdotal evidence of it in the past. It turns out Rogan could smell a difference in my breath. Although he didn't know it was cancer, he knew something was very odd about me and he didn't like it.

I learned later that dogs can smell a difference in human scent either from breath, saliva, blood or urine. They have a far better sense of smell than us: humans have around six million olfactory



THE MEDICAL LAB

Rogan knew something was wrong with **Andie Fuller** before she did. Here, she describes how she became involved with the Medical Detection Dogs charity

receptors while dogs have about 300 million. Until recently, it was not known that cancer had a smell.

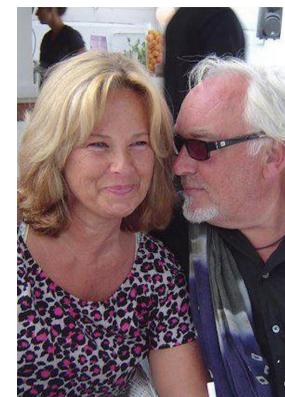
The doctor put my cancer down to the years of stress I'd had over Dave's heart problems, which he thought had weakened my immune system. We'd met in the 1970s when we were both living the rock'n'roll lifestyle. He fronted a band called Walkie Talkies and I was working with Elton John as a fundraising manager for a charity.

But in 1980 our whirlwind life came crashing down when Dave had a massive heart attack, aged 34. We moved back to Guernsey; I became a receptionist at the doctor's surgery and Dave was Head of Art at a secondary school. We had two wonderful sons, Tom, who's now 34 and Duncan, 32. Over the years Dave had two quadruple bypasses and 12 stents inserted.

But now our roles were reversed and Dave became my carer during the two long bouts of chemotherapy. Just as I was starting the last dose, Dave collapsed and again it was Rogan who let me know something was wrong. I heard this awful soulful howling at the bottom of the stairs – Dave had blacked out while bringing me a cup of morning tea. By the time the paramedics arrived, he had been without oxygen for 20 minutes. He was put on a life-support machine, but a couple of weeks later it became clear nothing could be done and it was switched off.

Straight after his funeral, I returned to the Marsden for my surgery. It was tough on my own, but throughout I kept reminding myself that Dave and I had been lucky to have had 33 years together.

There were many sad times after Dave's death, but I kept busy and, in the spring of 2015, I bought a new Labrador called Luna.



THE MEDICAL DETECTION DOGS CHARITY



The Medical Detection Dogs charity was set up in 2008 by scientist Dr Claire Guest. A year later her own dog, Daisy, started to warn her something was wrong, and she was subsequently found to have an early-stage breast tumour. The charity trains two types of dogs. Bio-detection dogs are trained for six to eight months and detect diseases, especially cancer, from minute

chemical changes in breath, skin or urine samples. The medical alert assistance dogs help people living with a condition such as diabetes or PTSD. The dog is trained to be alert and to react to an imminent 'episode'. The charity has placed 80 medical alert assistance dogs so far. It costs £29,000 to train one. For more information, go to medicaldetectiondogs.org.uk

ONE OF THE PUPS LIVES WITH MP IAIN DUNCAN SMITH AND HIS WIFE, BETSY, WHO'S THE CHARITY'S TRUSTEE

HAPPY DAYS
Below left: Andie and Dave.
Below: Three of Luna's puppies are now bio-detection dogs

Her breeders told me she was the niece of a bitch called Daisy, who had diagnosed the breast cancer of Claire Guest, founder and CEO of the charity Medical Detection Dogs.

Given my history with Rogan, I was immediately interested. I had always intended to breed Luna, so when in 2018 I knew she was pregnant, I contacted Claire and offered to donate a puppy to the charity. In the end she bought a further three.

After eight weeks, a pilot friend flew me and four of the pups to the charity's headquarters in Milton Keynes to begin their training. The dogs aren't just taught to detect cancer, but other conditions such as Parkinson's or to warn diabetics that their blood-sugar levels are falling.

Three out of the four puppies are now bio-detection dogs; the other turned out to be too timid and was found a loving home. One of the pups, Hetty, lives with the MP Iain Duncan Smith and his wife Betsy, who's the charity's trustee.

As for me, I was given the all-clear in 2016 and am now enjoying my retirement. Of course, I wish Dave was here but I have all those fantastic memories – and he lives on through our two wonderful boys.

Sadly, just before Luna gave birth to her puppies in July 2018, my darling Rogan died from cancer – oh, the irony. As awful as it was, he was 13 and really would have hated being around seven noisy, exuberant puppies. I kept one pup out of the litter, called Ruby, who is now 18 months old.

Luna occasionally visits retirement homes now as a therapy dog, cheering up residents and searching for biscuits in their pockets. So life is good!

AS TOLD TO CHRISTOPHER WHITE