

The Light Within: Alisha Guest's Journey of Strength, Love, and Resilience

Everyone is running a bit behind on the morning of the Distinguished Survivor photo shoot. It's just after 8 a.m., and heavy clouds roll in, threatening rain. Eyes are still sleepy, coffee hasn't quite worked its magic, and the photographer scans the area for warm light on a cool, gray morning. Dr. Raja arrives, and shortly after, our honoree finds us.

Alisha Guest wastes no time making an entrance—with humor and heart. “Hi, my name is Alisha, and this is my husband, David. I can’t seem to get rid of him.” Her laugh is contagious, uplifting—an audible spark of hope and healing. Within moments, everyone is smiling. Dr. Raja greets her with a warm embrace, a clear sign of a deep bond forged in trust, care, and mutual admiration. Throughout the morning, their laughter and playful connection.



Alisha Guest. Photo By Lauren McCollough

But Alisha isn't here just for the camera. She's also receiving labs and fluids—a reminder that even on a day meant to celebrate, the journey continues. I join her and David for what turns out to be an unforgettable walk-through courage and care.

The life of a cancer patient is often misunderstood until experienced firsthand. At CARTI, the routine is finely tuned. Nurses greet patients by name, knowing not just their charts, but their stories. For many, this is a long fight—measured in months, sometimes years. And yet, amid this shared struggle, there's community, familiarity, and remarkable strength.

When we sit to talk, Alisha is unfazed by the room around her. She knows each person here has their own mountain to climb. My first question is simple: “What was your life like before your diagnosis?” She pauses, then smiles. “Normal.”

But her version of “normal” tells a much deeper story.

Alisha lost her father at 25. “I miss him all the time. I dreamed about him just last night. I wonder if he knows I have cancer.” She once lived and worked in China and considered returning—until she met David. A Navy veteran, he is her second husband. Her first passed away, and she and David had been married just over four years when she was diagnosed.

Their love story began on Facebook Messenger. Though they had both graduated from Bryant High School, they'd never really connected—until David, by his own admission, posted a “whiny” breakup message. Alisha messaged him with her signature blend of sass and honesty: “Get over it. I just lost my husband.” What began as a bold message turned into something lasting. They dated for several months and were soon married.



***Dr. Raja (CARTI) and Alisha Guest.
Photo by Lauren McCollough***

Now, walking through the halls of CARTI to the treatment floor, it's clear this couple has weathered more than most. The fourth floor, where treatments are administered, is designed to comfort—recliners, warm lighting, and soft conversations. Alisha walks in and is instantly wrapped in hugs and hellos. She's family here.

David hasn't missed a single chemo session. “Twenty-six treatments,” he told Alisha. Later that night—nearly 11 p.m.—he told her how much he appreciated her.

husband. I couldn't, and wouldn't want to, walk this path without him. He is my support, my chef, my housekeeper, my lawn boy, my nurse, my counselor, my best friend, and the most wonderful husband anyone could ask for.”

The love goes both ways. When I speak privately with David, he's candid. “As a husband, you do what you have to do. You have to be flexible. So much will be asked of you. You have to let others grieve for your wife, too. Before anything else, you have to be her friend.”

When Alisha was diagnosed with metastatic endocervical adenocarcinoma, the prognosis was grim. The survival rate is devastatingly low. It's classified as incurable. David doesn't sugarcoat the weight of it. “Living alone? It scares the hell out of me. It's a constant anxiety.”

Alisha is open about the early symptoms—bleeding, fatigue, and soreness. “I thought it was menopause or age. I was just so tired. I'd nap at lunch to get through the day.” She recalls the first doctor who dismissed her symptoms and refused to order an \$80 test that could have changed her outcome. “He kept saying nothing was wrong. But clearly, something was.”

Two years later, after unrelenting symptoms, she got her diagnosis. The first doctor said there was nothing that could be done. But then she found CARTI. “They told me they may not be able to cure me, but they could help me—and they have. Dr. Raja didn't hesitate. CARTI has been wonderful to us.”

She gestures to the room full of patients. “This is my life now. CARTI is my life. I’ve made friends here. We go out to eat. We hug. The nurses know your name. I see so many people ring the bell—and I’m still here.”

And that, in itself, is a powerful kind of hope.

“I feel good here,” she says. “Maybe not in my body, but in my spirit.”

If sharing her story helps one person, she says it’s all worth it. She admits she skipped recommended screenings. “I take responsibility for where I am.” I gently remind her that cancer is a thief, not a punishment. She agrees but remains an advocate for prevention.

Alisha’s cancer is linked to HPV, and she’s passionate about awareness. “I don’t know why any parent wouldn’t vaccinate their kids if it helps them.” David nods. “It just makes sense.”

So, what’s next?

Alisha grins. “I’ve already beaten some of the odds. The tumor’s shrinking. Even the lymph nodes. I know we’re all on borrowed time—but I’m not going anywhere.” Her voice is firm, full of fire and grace. Positivity isn’t just a mindset for her—it’s a daily mission.

As the interview comes to a close, I ask what it meant to be chosen as the 2019 Cattle Baron’s Distinguished Survivor. Her eyes fill with tears. “When I got the call, I just started crying. We both did. Out of all the people... they chose me. It means so much.”

She laughs, wiping away tears. “I don’t know why I’m crying. Wait, yes I do—I’m a ‘ball-bag!’” Everyone laughs. She shrugs and smiles wide, “I cry easy. I laugh easy.”

That’s Alisha Guest—fierce, funny, and full of heart. A woman who turns pain into purpose, and who reminds us that even in the darkest battles, light finds a way to shine.