

Ricky recalled the moment we made it to Piker's Peak, aka The False Summit, at 11,200 feet.

We battled it out all the way up within about a thousand feet of the summit, and I think at that point everybody realized that the summit was still a really far, far-reaching goal. Jen had her close friends with her—an all-female team that was climbing together. We had a huge crew of guys pulling her up, and it was tough to concede that we might have gotten her as high as we could, but we were running out of time and had to stop and turn around. It was heartbreaking.

We released the female volunteers to go on without us. They were in tears like everyone else. We handed them our flag, which reached the summit with them.

### **“I’m coming back to do Adams.”**

Ten months later, in the summer of 2017, Jen started having some major difficulties. She had even greater pain and weakness in her left arm. Jen knows herself well. She got scared and quiet about it. She finally spoke up, and we raced to see Dr. Calabresi. He ordered MRIs, and we met with him shortly afterward.

Indeed, Jen had another significant lesion on her spine corresponding to where she was having the issues with her left arm. After five-plus years with no new lesions, she got a big one. That meant her current medication wasn't working and the disease was marching again, attacking her spinal cord. She couldn't afford more of those lesions.

She cried and cried and tucked herself away. Two days later she emerged. Her first call was to Ricky. “I’m coming back to do Adams again in a month. If this disease is going to take me down, there are things I need to do beforehand. Summiting Mount Adams is one of them. Can you do it?”

Ricky answered, “Can we do it in a month? We’ve been waiting for this call. We’re ready, and we have a much better plan for this attempt.” This is how he remembers Jen’s Summit Attempt 2.0:



Jen committed to getting herself physically ready and able to help us where we needed help, and all of us had a higher level of commitment to get to the top.

Jen was an inspiration to watch. When she flew into Portland for the climb she was barely moving, but looking back I think she was being purposeful in all her movements to conserve energy. On Mount Adams, she got up and walked at certain times—a hundred yards across a rock field at one point—where the year before, we had to carry her. Those walks of hers threw Andy for a loop because he was concerned about her strength, but she was focused and knew she had to walk some on her own to make it all the way.

The scene as we approached the summit was one of the most surreal I've ever witnessed on a mountain. That year a throng of butterflies had stormed the entire Pacific Northwest, and when we were fifty yards from the summit, out of nowhere thousands and thousands of purple butterflies swarmed down on us. Jen got out of the sled and took off running to the summit. Andy ran after her, freaking out and yelling at her to stop. She made it to the top and jumped up and down, butterflies flying all around her and landing on her. Soon Andy and a couple of other people who were on the climb joined Jen and the butterflies in the celebration. It was totally one of the best summit experiences that I've ever observed.

Ricky's new strategic plan worked. He helped our dream of standing on a summit together come true.

Jen, ever the stubborn wife, insisted on walking the last half mile alone. She wanted to enjoy the serenity and take in the beauty. Before departing she had made me sit in the chair in the relatively flat section.

I laughed and obliged. Wow! What a scary experience, giving control to someone else as I bounced and sped down a slight decline. I had seen how great the challenge was for Jen. Sitting in that chair for ten minutes greatly enhanced my appreciation for her effort.

A lot of credit was heaped upon the people pulling the chair. The experience of being in the chair was transformational for me. Jen transformed as well. She learned to trust others, to stop trying to control things she couldn't. And she learned just how strong she really was.