



**Gil C**

It was after my annual medical at age 58 I received a call from my doctor. The digital exam showed the prostate gland was enlarged but smooth and soft. The result of the PSA came back 7. My doctor was concerned and sent me to an urologist, which took about four months waiting time.

In his office a large poster displayed an elderly man standing in front of a urinal, a young boy was standing behind him with legs crossed. The caption was “Never line up behind a grey haired man if you have to go real bad.” I knew I was in the right place.

I was sent for my first biopsy not knowing what to expect, but thinking the worst. The urologist did not take the time to explain the procedure of the biopsy.

I arrived at the Prostate Cancer Clinic with my wife and a “full bladder”. The thought of Cancer was on my mind even though I told my family I was not worried.

The nurse asked me to undress down to my socks and shorts, and put on the house- coat that is always wide open at the back.

The ultra sound was completed and off to the bathroom to empty my bladder. I went back into the little change room and waited for the unexpected.

Dr. Wiseman told me they would be taking 10 samples and asked me to lie down on the examining bed and face the wall. My shorts were pulled down and something that felt the size of a roto-rooter got my attention.

There was no local anesthetic offered at that time. The first five pieces of flesh were not that bad, but I started the count down for the last five. At the end of the biopsy, I walked out and was able to have a smile on my face. The results came back negative and I was told it would be a waiting and watching for any changes.

I had four biopsies over an eight year period. My PSA went up every two years, from 7, 11, and 17 to 26. It was the last biopsy that showed there was cancer in one of the lobes of the prostate gland. My Gleason count was 8.

On my second visit for a biopsy, I was lying on the exam table, face to the wall, and Dr. Wiseman said he thought he recognized me. I said I hope it was not from the end he was viewing. He said no, I saw your face when you came in.

There are over one million hits on the internet for prostate cancer. I have looked at a lot of them. One of the articles I read stated if one hundred men were diagnosed with prostate cancer, and they did nothing for prevention, eighty would die with prostate cancer and twenty would die because of it.

I told this to my urologist Dr. Metcalfe, he said unfortunately you are in the twenty men that would die without treatment.

With a PSA of 26 and a Gleason of 8, my options for treatment were limited. The two options that were recommended to me was surgery or radiation.

It was decision time.

The two options that were recommended are the ones I least wanted. I preferred the radiation seed implants referred to as Brachy Therapy or the freezing referred to as Cryo Therapy.

After looking at radiation and surgery, I elected for surgery because I was told it was very difficult to do surgery after radiation as the prostate gland turns into scar tissue.

Radical Prostatectomy:

After checking into the Rocky View Hospital, I was led to a change room and told to put on a "back end open" housecoat. They put me in a reclining chair with warm blankets and asked me to wait.

At the appropriate time I was led down a long corridor into the operating room. Dr. Metcalfe said if I wanted to bolt, now was the time. I smiled and climbed up on the table. I was told to sit up, bend over, bend my knees and grab my legs. That's the last thing I remember until a nurse asked me if I could move my toes.

They placed me on the hospital bed with I Vs in my arm and the unforgettable catheter plugged in for hands free use.

The scrub nurse came and said she had to wash me. I said I had a shower this morning so it was not necessary. She used a damp cloth and wiped my leg, it was a bright orange colour. She then lifted up the blankets and my fancy nightshirt and proceeded to scrub the disinfectant off my shy body.

Two months later I arrived at the hospital to visit a friend that had the same surgery. The same nurse was about to scrub him down. I told her she had done the same thing to me earlier. She quickly replied in her Scottish accent that she did not recognize me with me clothes on.

The treatment the nurses and staff gave at the Rocky View was first class. The one thing that surprised me, there was NO PAIN from the operation. My throat was a little sore from the tube they inserted during the operation.

Every time the nurses came to the room they asked if I had passed gas. They said this was the only section of the hospital they cheered when a patient passed gas. I got my cheer on the second day!

My grand daughter was born in the same hospital while I was recovering. I went down to see her for the first time pushing the IV and catheter holder and wearing a new housecoat. I had my picture taken holding the precious bundle. She will wonder in years to come why grandpa had his housecoat on.

The two concerns I had were incontinence and erectile dysfunction. They gave us an exercise for the first problem. I can proudly say I have control of my bladder. The second problem, we started working on "it", but it has been interrupted by Hormone Therapy. On the tenth day after surgery I went to Dr. Metcalfe's office to have the catheter removed. He had a very young female urologist observing him with patients. He asked me to lie on the table and he would remove the tube on the count of three. This should have been a warning. It felt like the tube was attached to my knee.

It was about two months after surgery I was able to go golfing. I enjoyed the game even with the high score.

Three months following surgery my PSA was virtually non-detectable 0.01. The doctor said they did biopsies on the surrounding lymph nodes and the results were negative. What a relief, I thought we had beaten the big "C".

I was sent for PSA testing every three months for the next year. The results were very low 0.1 and 0.3 and the fourth test showed 0.4. No big deal I thought!

Dr. Metcalfe said the PSA should not be rising with the prostate removed. He referred me back to Dr. Husain at the Tom Baker Center.

It was recommended that I consider Hormone Therapy and I volunteered for a case study. They randomly selected the patients for a six-month or a two-year study. I was selected for the two-year study and told how lucky I was.

At the same time I signed up for a study with the University of Calgary about physical activity of cancer patients on Hormone Therapy.

The best part of the Hormone injection is the fuel cost we have saved over this past winter. I never knew what a "Hot Flush" was before. Just ask me now. The size of the needle they use to inject the time release tablet seems larger than the big knitting needles.

I was told each injection was worth \$1,400.00 and paid for by the Cancer Clinic.

Being in two case studies has given more attention to my problem than just a patient to a doctor. I should have the final results from the U of C study by September showing how I ranked with the other old farts during the physical activities.

#### External Beam Radiation:

Three months after Hormone Therapy, they scheduled me for radiation. They did an ultrasound and placed three little tattoos on my body for the laser beam on the radiation machine to lock onto.

I was told 25% of the patients have no problems with side effects, 50% have a few side effects and the other 25% have several problems.

Thirty-nine treatments were scheduled for every morning except Saturday and Sunday. The procedure was fast and very simple.

A friend at the gym where I have a workout each week day morning asked me what they do. I said you go into the radiation room with two or three young ladies and they ask you to take your pants off and get on the bed. He replied, "It could only happen in America". Each treatment took about ten minutes from the time you went into the room until you were walking outside.

Side effects were minimal. My bowels became very active with an abundance of gas. I had the urge to go to the bathroom, mostly gas but sometimes there was the one percent substance. You did not want to take a chance on any surprises so you always sat down to do the job.

The last two weeks of treatment, I began to get tired in the afternoons. A fifteen-minute power nap was all that I needed. I asked the girls if they knew how the treatments were going and if they were doing any good. I was told they did not know and would only find

out when treatments were complete and the results were checked. My last PSA showed 0.02 and I was told to come back in six months.

I requested the Hormone injections stop after one year because the flushes were very intense and woke me up six to seven times each night. January was my last injection and I was told it would take until November for the estrogen to dissipate from my body. When the hormones and testosterone are back to normal, I will then start working on problem # 2.

I feel very pleased with the treatment I have received from all departments that treat cancer. Not once did I feel I was getting second-class treatment. My sons wanted me to go to the Mayo Clinic in Arizona. We arranged an appointment but I ended up staying in Calgary because I truly feel we have world-class facilities for cancer treatment in our own back yard.

#### Volunteering at the Prostate Cancer Clinic:

I felt I had to give something back because of the treatment I had received.

I now volunteer each Tuesday morning from 8:30 until noon. I talk with the patients that come in for a biopsy. Some of these men are very nervous and have only a vague idea of what is taking place. Men in general, do not like to talk about things that affect their "Man-hood".

It gives me great pleasure talking with these men and their wives and answering questions they felt uncomfortable asking. I always start the conversation by telling them I am a volunteer and I have had four biopsies in the past. All without a local anesthetic!

I can't give you advice, but I can tell you my experiences.

I invite them to come to the resource center to ask questions and check out books.

I tell them the more information you have, the easier it will be to make a decision about treatment if it is required.

I wish them good luck and tell them it will most likely be a "Watch and Wait" situation.

Gil

Cancer Survivor, age 68