

Good evening ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Sol Dennis and I was born December 30, 1925. You can do the math to figure out my age!

I had a Radical Prostatectomy, also known as an RP, on September 13, 1993 at Toronto General Hospital. My PSA just prior to my surgery was 5.2 and my Gleason Score was 5.

My story actually began in the spring when I went to see my GP for a routine check up, and my PSA was 5.3. He referred me to a Urologist, and when he did a rectal exam on me, he said he felt a nodule and was sending me to see Dr. Michael Jewett, a Urological Oncologist at Princess Margaret Hospital, for further tests.

Further testing obviously included a biopsy, and it came back positive for prostate cancer. After Dr. Jewett told me the “good news” and asked me what I wanted to do, I told him that I wanted to think about it for a while. The reason that I wanted to wait is that I felt like I had been hit in the head with a baseball bat!

All I could see was a SKULL and CROSSBONES and DEATH, as my mother and an older brother had both died of cancer, and I felt that I was next!

In those days, you only had three choices to consider: a Radical Prostatectomy, radiation or Watchful Waiting.

As my wife Rita and I left the hospital, once we got outside, she asked me what there was to think about.

So I called Dr. Jewett back soon after and told him that I had decided on the RP, and he agreed.

My operation took 4 ½ to 5 hours, which included a “cold biopsy” of the Lymph node, which was sent to the lab during the operation. Then, they waited for the results and either proceeded with the surgery, or closed you up and suggested radiation as treatment. My Lymph nodes were thankfully not involved.

Most people today don't know that we also had to bank our own blood, which they used during the operation. In fact, they woke me up during the night to tell me that they were giving me an extra transfusion, as I was losing blood.

But here I am!

The usual hospital stay was 10 to 12 days and it depended on whether you were eating semi-solid food and when you were able to pass gas.

About 10-12 days after the surgery they removed the stitches and then you were discharged and sent home with your catheter trailing along.

Although I could hardly wait to have it removed, when I thought about it, “he” was my best friend!

About fourteen days later I went back to see the surgeon and he removed “him”. I think the first 10 to 12 days at home was the worst time for me, compared to being in the hospital, as there you were never alone except when visiting hours were over. But at home I was mostly alone.

I went back to have my first PSA following surgery on November 22, 1993 and the reading was 0.1 which they called zero.

In December I went to a meeting at Toronto General which was made up of guys from 65 to 80 years of age, who had all had surgery, and who were complaining so much it made you sick. The facilitator was a nurse who was writing her thesis on prostate cancer.

There and then I decided that I would try to get into a group where we could help other newly-diagnosed men who were looking for information and support.

With the help of the nurses at TGH and the late Wally Hamilton, who had started a support group called Man to Man, we helped men who were diagnosed with prostate cancer and who were going to be treated by removing their prostates.

We would go to their home, meet them for coffee, see them at support nights or at Awareness Nights, and try to put them at ease.

Slowly our little “family” grew – we considered them as such – as the men found a place where they could tell their stories, get some sympathy, and learn to be positive.

The years ran by and our group grew in size.

That brings me to May 12, 2008 and my yearly visit to have my PSA checked which, by the way, was 0.05 or undetectable.

When Dr. Jewett came into my room, he asked, “What are you doing here?” He then opened my chart and it said “DISCHARGED”!

Then he added, “You are considered CURED. You are my first patient to reach 15 years!”

Then he came over and hugged me!

So think positive and never give up!

Thank you.