



Brian S –Age 62

When we are young and seemingly invincible, our thoughts are not in the least on health issues. Our diet does not seem to matter and unless we are subject to fairly rigid parental guidance, we don't have any question about eating "fast food" on a regular basis. I sometimes wonder if that was a contributing factor to my prostate cancer, which was diagnosed at age 61.

At age 32 a non-cancerous kidney condition resulted in removal of one kidney and subsequent frequent infection flare-ups. Every 6 to 8 weeks a routine urinalysis was done to make sure my existing kidney remained healthy. My urologist kept close track of my urinary health through the years. Twenty years later, during my annual physical exam, a digital rectal exam (DRE) showed a slightly enlarged prostate and at one point my general practitioner felt a slight ridge on the prostate. After consulting with my urologist, he confirmed the slight abnormality and a prostate specific antigen (PSA) blood test was done. My PSA was about a 2.0 (not abnormal for a guy my age). Subsequent PSA tests done yearly bounced around between 2.0 and 2.7. At one point it went to 3.5. Maybe we should do a biopsy. Great news. The biopsy was negative, what a relief! Continued yearly digital rectal exams and PSA tests showed slight rises and then back to lower scores. PSA was rising slightly overall. Then a PSA came back 7.6. Maybe it's just an infection or irritation. We checked this out with another biopsy. This time we were not so lucky. Of the 10 cores taken, one core had a positive reading confirming adenocarcinoma (cancer) on about 5 to 10% of that one core. This confirmed prostate cancer, probably early stage and contained within the prostate. Now it was decision time. After speaking to my urologist, he gave me the facts, suggested I do my research and then set up another appointment to discuss where we go from here. My Gleason score was 6(3+3) so we felt time was on our side to research and take some time in making my decision. He suggested I go to The Prostate Cancer Institute (PCI) to speak to volunteers who had been through the exercise and also to get information from their library as well as a list of approved web sites. I now had information and could do my research, finding out a multitude of things about prostate cancer and its treatments. Now came "information overload" and confusion as to what I should do. I again spoke to volunteers at PCI who assured me that this was a normal progression in making my decision. They were very supportive and although not making any clear-cut

recommendations, they guided me through the decision making process. I opted for a radical prostatectomy (surgical removal of the prostate), which sounds rather harsh, but in my case I felt it was the best route to cure my cancer. My wife and I had numerous discussions about my situation and the resulting possibilities of side effects. She was truly my friend and companion and helped me cope with my concerns, my decision and possible complications after surgery. A date was set. March 2005. Radical prostatectomy. After surgery I was surprised at the lack of pain, but it did take my strength and endurance down more than I thought it would. I just didn't bounce back as quickly as I had with my kidney surgery. Maybe the extra 30 years had something to do with it! Then a few days in hospital, and home to recover with my in-dwelling catheter. This was not new to me because of prior surgery. After an extended time with the catheter because of some difficulty making the connection at the bladder, it was removed and I was expecting some leakage until things got back to normal. In my case, the leakage did not occur instead I was unable to pass my urine. After a trip to emergency, and a stretch at the bladder neck, I was again without a catheter. The problem persisted and I learned to relieve myself by self-catheterization when my bladder filled. These "in and out" catheters seem like they would be really offensive, but after a few times it was relatively simple. I was very discouraged after 2 months of this and I only hoped this would not be a lifelong procedure. My urologist and I decided to do another stretch to the bladder neck and hoped this would rectify the situation. After a couple of days I was able to drain without the use of catheters.

My results showed no cancer in lymph nodes that were removed and all surgical margins were negative. We are assuming and hoping that all of the prostate cancer cells were removed and no recurrence comes about. My PSA will be checked regularly. Next one is Sept 2005.

Through my ordeal I have continued to maintain an active lifestyle and looking back, it seems as though the interruptions have really been minor. My wife and I have spoken freely about the physical changes and erectile difficulties to this point. We both agree that being alive and well means more than conducting a robust sex life. Time will tell if the erectile nerves will recover enough to enable that part of our sensual relationship to come back.

Since my surgery, I have enrolled in a wellness program through The Prostate Cancer Institute, which covers fitness, nutrition and stress management. I have found this very helpful in my recovery. My diet has changed and my fitness level is as good or better than pre-surgery.

My thanks to The Prostate Cancer Institute for helping me with the one-on-one discussions, information from their library and setting me up with the wellness program. I am now a volunteer at PCI due to the help I received and am looking forward to helping others.