

FISHERMEN'S VOICE

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News & Comment for and by the Fishermen of Maine

FREE

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Naples Florida, 7:30 am, January. 7:30, the anointed hour. In just a short while Dr. D. would implant the gold. Those little gold pins designed to unnervingly guide the \$4M Robotic Radiator to my ugly oversized cancerous prostate. We arrive early. Minor problem. Receiver of the lame and halt doesn't open until 8. Mmmm. A niggle. We wait; have a few laughs with an elder Hibernian and a reticent Muslim till the office opens. With niggle now festering I step up to the window, give receptionist my name. She says, "We have no appointment for Mr. Lee. Perhaps my dear (with her best 'you nummy smile') you need to be across the street at Admissions, Room 105, I'll call over." Doctor D's nurse had given us not only the wrong office but also the wrong building. Now we're late. "Thanks love and have a good---", thinking quite other we raced out the door.

With AJ in shoes designed for show, not distance and speed, we wobbled through early morning traffic over a few football field distances to the inviting Starbucks catered coffee shop main entrance. Hey! Not your regional county clinic by any imagination.

NCH, Naples Community Hospital, Naples, Fla. To the native cognoscenti as "Never Come Home," NCH was a bit like coming home as I'd had the new knee installed here a year ago. If medical crises have to be dealt with in the 'Golden Years', setting could be a lot worse.

We find Room 105 and I'm enfolded on the conveyor belt. Fill out more of the same questions on a clipboard (never dare question efficiency in a hospital). All the while there's Mothership, by a sweet, years on, Minnesota refugee who immediately put AJ at ease with reverent words of the almighty. Mr. Lee was now in the hands of the best! Headed north and gaining ground. Yes!

Three months previous I'd asked dear friend nurse Judy at the Southwest Harbor clinic to find the best urologist in Bangor. Long time now I'd worried whereabouts of closest pee hole or had to break good sleep for relief. "Rotor Rooter" operation sounded like an option.

Judy did great! Doctor J was good. Young personable and energetic with a fun staff. We hit it off. Nurse took the necessary tests.

"You look healthy," he said, "but I'll need to check for cancer. Have to do a biopsy."

No sweat. Couldn't happen to me. Exercise irregularly, word hard, feel good. Few marts a day with red wine cancer fighting protocol. Go for it.

Call comes back in a week, "Dr. J would like to see you on Tuesday."

"Good or bad?"

“Mr. Wilbur the Dr. will have to speak with you.”

Nurses are sworn upon loss of first born never to give up this secret information were it to ease a patient’s anxiety.

“Is it raining out?”

“Perhaps a bit.”

Yes it was the big C. Dreaded word. No one in right mind would ever want to hear it. And yet, as I listened to Dr. J delineate and suggest the options it was almost a relief.

Three of five males are treated to “God’s gift to man,” as good friend Eric White puts it. I was one of the three.

“Doc, let’s just get to the nasty. Take it out and be done with it.” Get rid of two problems, cancer and enlargement. Whatever had to be was dealt in my cards. He’d operate and remove the prostate. Be about a six-week recovery with possible loss of functions.

Op in two to three weeks. We headed for Greenville and I tackled the woodpile. Goddamn it felt good to cleave that birch and maple. Stack up layer on layer and breathe in clear, crisp, fall air. We enjoyed Greenville, caught up with old friends, did some writing. Then a niggle surfaced. Began to question the recovery time and problems, the probable loss of sex life. I called Tom Byrnes, a longtime friend and hunting companion recovering from robotic prostate surgery and he brought me up to date on his recovery and some of the problems. Niggle smoldered. Called one of my mentors, Ron Munzenreiter, preceder of knee surgery and savior of our pennies after 9/11 crash, who I’d vaguely remembered had had a new and relatively experimental prostate procedure. He explained the procedure called cyberknife, reiterated how completely noninvasive it was. Piece of cake. For some odd reason I didn’t connect and decided to stay with removal.

Next day Ron called back, “We’re very concerned. Aly and I think you should reconsider. We think you’re making a big mistake. Remember 100% success and no recovery time. You’re too young. Niggle smoked.

6:30 Friday morning, four 24’s till S-day. AJ wriggles across the bed. “You know,” she whispers, “maybe you should reconsider this operation. Think about what Ron is telling you. No side effects. 100% success rate, only five days of radiation treatment.” The niggle headed and slipped away. I agreed.

Waiting at the operations ward door was a good looking curly blonde, ex-Tenants Harbor. She waited while I did the “Don the jonny” routine, sealed clothes and shoes in plastic bag and stretched out on the curtain shrouded bed and Tenants Harbor sheathed me in a warmed blanket. Good digs if needs be.

Liza, chief sleepmaker, fresh, fun and looking if she’d just graduated from high school, hands over another clipboard and the boy digs down for a little Maine humah.

“Hey guys, we’ve got a live one here. This one’s fun.” Quite obvious I was twenty years shy of most of my wardmates.

The crew hooked me up to intravenous, slid the body to a gurney and off to operating room.

Liza's sleepmaking took about as long as the operation. Dr. D was 12 minutes flat and so good was he I suffered very minor discomfort for a few hours.

All set for Phase II, the MRI. Scans and appointment made, then the ridiculous bad news. "Bones", radiology assistant for Dr. J calls. Maine Blue Cross Anthem had denied coverage. Florida Anthem and Medicare cover the procedure, Maine says no. Felt like I'd been clipped off at the knees. Their reason: experimental. Needed five years for statistics etc. Do they understand? Do I need to spell cancer? Cyberknife is simply a better and more effective way of delivering radiation with a 100% success rate, almost zero side effects and way less total time of treatment. Talk about frustration. In this electronic age of daily advancement five years is a lifetime and by the time bureaucracy comes around, new and better will be reality. Treated to a view of #1, it will be hard to settle for second.

My Dad the doctor retired from medicine early. Reason: insurance companies and government were taking over. The ability of doctors to practice the best possible medicine would be going down the tube. God love him, he saw it coming. It's here.

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During the Christmas season Bangor Daily had a page of six cookie recipes and I dearly love making, sharing, and eating cookies. We like this one the best so far.

Buffalo Cookies

1 cup butter flavored Crisco	1 teaspoon baking powder
1 cup white sugar	1 teaspoon baking soda
1 cup brown sugar	1/2 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoon milk	1 cup oatmeal
1 teaspoon vanilla	1 cup frosted flakes (crushed to make 1/2 cup)
2 eggs	1/2 cup walnuts
2 1/2 cups flour	1 cup coconut (optional but good)

Mix first 6 ingredients well in a large bowl. Add remaining after mixing in another bowl. I use a whisk for mixing the dry and wooden spoon for combo. Have a thing about electric mixers.

Spoon onto ungreased cookie sheets. Bake at 350 degrees for 13-15 minutes, just until edges are brown. With good regular heat NMT 13 minutes. Cool 3 minutes on cookie sheet before removing.

Fair winds and good roads.

Lee S. Wilbur