

# When I Think About Prostate Cancer

Category: Prostate Blues

written by Darwin Deen | June 8, 2018

When I think about prostate cancer, I see myself and the men I've been close to as ducks in a shooting gallery. The passage of time gives the Grim Reaper more chances to take a shot at us.

Ping.

My dad got prostate cancer twenty years ago.

He was a devout believer in alternative medicine. He grew organic vegetables and made his own cheese from a goat he kept. He took no drugs, but plenty of supplements. When he told me about his cancer diagnosis, we started searching for alternative treatments.

But my dad was too frightened to forgo conventional medicine. He had his prostate removed, and against the advice of his doctors even insisted on an orchiectomy to remove any trace of testosterone that might induce any itinerant cancer cells to grow. Thankfully, it worked. His cancer was cured.

Unfortunately, within three years he was diagnosed with a primary liver cancer. He had no risk factors, and his doctors were surprised. But I harbored a sneaking suspicion that his lack of testosterone somehow impacted his ability to protect himself.

Ping.

A few years later, my father-in-law was diagnosed.

He underwent a round of radium-seed implants. During the treatment, he was often tired, had to interrupt our weekend jogging to empty his bladder frequently and could not run as far or as fast. Thankfully he is still with us—cured as far as we know—but he never did regain his former vigor.

Ping.

Last summer, when I was attending the wedding of one of my college roommates and friend of almost fifty years, he shared with me that he was being treated with seeds.

Ping.

I returned from the wedding and visited another college roommate, just after he was diagnosed and awaiting the results of his MRI.

I fully expect both to get past these hurdles, but have seen in each of them the sudden recognition of our own mortality. Being told you have cancer is like reading an account of how you died: You don't get a date, but you suspect it's going to be sooner rather than later.

Aging sucks. There's no doubt about it. You get better and better through your forties and even your fifties, but then one day you wake up and realize you're on the downslope of the hill. You don't heal as fast. You don't recover when things go wrong.

Ping. Ping. Ping.

My own issues with my prostate started almost twenty years ago, when I began waking up at night to pee. A few years after that I found that it was increasingly difficult to empty my bladder completely. Any older man reading this will recognize the symptoms of benign prostatic hypertrophy—a reminder that as I get older, I'm not getting better, I'm wearing out.

Fortunately, to date, my PSAs have stayed in the normal range. I even took a few years off from having them checked, just because I fancy myself a risk-taker. Now I wait, knowing that every male who is close to me has been hit by a Ping, and that one day it may be my turn.

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