



Tall Tales from the Editor

The beast or Upright and mobile

I had been at the south end of our Heritage apple orchard for about 15 minutes, pruning one of two four-year-old Red Rebel apple trees. This is an apple that originated around 1850, on a farm in Virginia—hence the name “Rebel.” In 1988, this apple was thought to be extinct. That same year one was discovered in Alabama that had been planted in 1930. Scion wood was taken from the Red Rebel that spring and some new trees were grafted up. It was quite lucky that this Red Rebel apple tree was rediscovered and new trees grafted from it because it died the very next year. Hopefully our Red Rebels will bear fruit this year so we can sample its rumored high dessert quality and exquisite flavor.

Our border collie, Barney McGee, a.k.a. Monster Boy, had already raced five cars (Thompson Creek Road rush hour) from one end of the orchard to the other in that same 15 minutes I was pruning. Barney McGee believes he is a Gold Olympic runner. His mission: be sure he crosses the finish line (either end of the orchard) ahead of his chosen opponent. Then he bristles his fur all up, prances around with an expression that says “It takes more than six cylinders to beat me!” Then he waits for his next race. Utah, our other border collie, has no interest in this sort of child’s play. Since he’s around 15 years old, following the sun from place to place is all the excitement he needs other than food. If I had half of McGee’s energy I could prune 100 apple trees a day. While I’m not as old or as slow as Utah, I do feel as if I might be older than dirt; decomposed granite anyone?

I had just finished up radiation treatment for prostate cancer and found myself extremely energy-challenged. Something like five years ago I had my prostate removed because of cancer. For three years I thought I had kicked the beast’s butt. Then my PSA (blood test) numbers started to climb. Turned out that the surgery eviction notice didn’t mean much to the beast. He just returned in the dark of night, settled back in and the squatter made himself at home. I then had to bring in a wrecking ball which consisted of 34 radiation treatments to terminate the beast once and for all.

Before I could start the radiation treatments, I had to have three small gold

markers placed in the area that once housed my beloved prostate. The markers showed the radiation tech where to radiate me. I can tell you that the placement of the gold markers was not a pleasant experience. I never would have guessed I could curl my toes back to my heels while lying in a compromising position on a medical table in the doctor’s office. I was unable to watch the procedure on the monitor due to my eyes being tightly squeezed shut from the agony I was experiencing during the marker placement. If I had felt anything remotely as painful as that outside the doctor’s office I would have called 9-1-1.

Now I wonder, with full body scans at the airport will these gold markers show up? Will I then be escorted to a small padded room that’s brightly lit, with a table for further probing? Will Homeland Security think I’m smuggling gold? What if I get mugged in San Francisco? Luckily the radiation treatments themselves were painless, Thank God!

First thing the radiation tech did was make a mold from my butt to my feet. That way I’d lie in the same position for all 34 treatments. Five days a week for over seven weeks, excluding holidays, I would lay on an x-ray table in my personalized mold. They’d shoot two sets of x-rays lining my gold mine or markers up with what I called “the master x-ray” or the one they took before I started treatments. Once the gold markers were lined up—bombs away—I’d get radiated from seven different angles, one at a time. I would spend around 20 minutes on the x-ray table for each treatment.

As I was being nuked I would watch a red light on the wall that flickered during my treatment. It read “Beam On.” Each day the flickering red light made me think of a laboratory scene in a really bad B Sci-Fi movie from 1950. Actually the whole ordeal felt like a bad movie, but I don’t recall ever auditioning for a lead role or for any role for that matter. Let me say right here that everyone at Providence Hospital was more than kind, caring and helpful. I haven’t received any portion of the bill yet; I hope that when I do that doesn’t mean I’ll get to know the cardiac department also.

Luckily the cancer itself has never made me sick or given me any pain. I didn’t

lose any hair on my head but the area that was radiated went bald. Towards the end of my treatments, I started suffering with ongoing horrendous migraine headaches from the stress of the ordeal and some very nasty pain in my bladder. By the way, did I say I’d recently had bladder cancer also and the two beasts are supposedly not related? The only relationship between the cancers could be that I had worked in the uranium mines in southeast Utah, but that’s a story for another day.

Speaking of bladder, I learned where every restroom was between Medford and Applegate because when it was time to go, that meant NOW! I had a fear of there being no restroom available. “Yes, officer, I know this is a parking lot. I know it’s disgusting, but my butt’s been radiated.” Would I get tasered, cuffed and hauled to the drunk tank? What about the back seat of the squad car—not a pretty picture.

Having cancer as well as other diseases can leave you with little or no dignity. Yet cancer isn’t something we wish to talk about. It’s too messy, it won’t happen to me or it’s just too plumb scary. Well, it’s all of the above and more. You can lose control of your bladder, your

bowels, your manhood, your sanity, your purpose in life and a lot more. It basically just sucks! Though there is always someone who is a lot worse off. I saw these people every day when I went in for treatments and I’d think I was lucky. I could be them.

I always wanted my luck to be platinum records hanging on my walls, a book on the New York Times best seller list or to hit it big with a lottery Power Ball ticket. Turns out luck is being alive, having a loving family, loving bride and life-long friends and living in the beautiful Applegate. Luck is all around us every day but we usually don’t see it because we’re too busy with the mundane. Luck—well I’m still upright and mobile and like my Red Rebel apple trees we are not going to be on the extinction list for a very long time!

“It’s not the load that breaks you down, it’s the way you carry it.”

—Lena Horne



The Editor, J.D. Rogers
541-846-7736

JACKSON COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER

PETS OF THE MONTH



Jasmine - #K0176
A princess looking for a whole new world.



Micky - #2355
An intelligent 8-month-old Rottweiler mix.



Tac - #K0291
A 4-year-old tabby with a reduced fee.



Socks - #0057
A 10-month-old male puppy in a tuxedo.



Lizzy - #K0107
A funny 1-year-old grey tabby with extra toes.



Tripp - #K0011
An adorable 2-year-old Pomeranian mix.

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