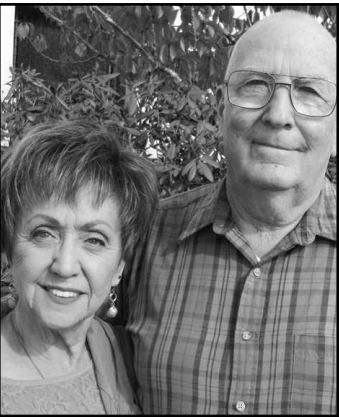


Us TOO Florence
Our Prostate Cancer Journey — Part 1



By RAY AND MARILYN BARBA
CANCER SURVIVOR

Following is part of a series of true personal stories about men's experience with prostate cancer. These men tell their stories with the hope that they will help someone else traveling the same road.

We were looking forward to writing another chapter in our book of life together!

Marilyn and I had been together for 52 years as man and wife, anticipating many more when the phone rang the afternoon of Dec. 24, 2014... Christmas Eve!

Our home was decorated, gifts wrapped, sugar cookies ready and the aromas of dinner with the traditional favorites filling the air. Soon our daughter, Susan, and her children would arrive, along with "Sherman," their Boston Terrier.

We answered the phone thinking it was family or friends calling.

It was Dr. Bryan Mehlhaff calling from the Oregon Urology Institute (OUI) in Springfield. He had promised to give us a call as soon as definitive results were available from the recent biopsy of my prostate. The results were not good.

I did have prostate cancer.

I had been getting my PSA checked every year since I was 40, because my father and four uncles had prostate cancer; my grandfather died from the disease.

In August, 2014, my PSA showed a sudden increase, going from 2.2 percent to 5.2 percent. To be cautious, my doctor wanted to recheck my PSA in three months.

Unfortunately, it was even higher, climbing to 6.6 percent. Without hesitation I was referred to Dr. Bryan Mehlhaff at OUI.

After Christmas, Marilyn and I (we are in this journey together) scheduled a thorough consultation with Dr. Mehlhaff. We were his last appointment of the day. In great detail, he explained the results from the biopsy and additional test results he had taken.

My Gleason Score was 9, with 10 being the highest level of aggressiveness. That number 9 indicated the cancer was very aggressive, nearly as aggressive as it gets.

Dr. Mehlhaff shared information about options we had for treatment going forward. We had quite a list of questions we needed answers for and he took his time answering them...with many of his answers resulting in more questions.

It was well past 6 p.m. when he walked us through the empty clinic to the front office door. We were overwhelmed, numb and confused about what to do next. Dr. Mehlhaff had given us contact information for the Florence Us TOO Prostate Cancer Education and Support Group led by Bob Horney, and highly recommended we talk to him. It was a long, somber

drive home.

Well, we didn't need to contact Bob because when we walked into our home at 8:20 p.m., the phone was ringing. Bob Horney introduced himself, saying Dr. Mehlhaff thought we could use hearing from one who understood from experience what we were feeling and facing.

It's difficult to put into words what his voice represented for us. Hope, encouragement, information and caring from Bob and new friends we made by attending the Us TOO Florence meetings have equipped us to be positive by doing all we can to fight and win our battle against prostate cancer.

Bob knew from experience that we were entering a frantic information gathering phase. Time was not on our side, but we needed to be informed

before we made decisions.

Answers to our questions just seemed to raise more questions — it was a tough time.

Through it all, Dr. Mehlhaff, Bob and the Us TOO Florence support group stood ready to help in every way possible.

We also attended the Lunch Bunch Us TOO Florence group that meets with Dr. Doug Hoff at Kozy Kitchen so we could get Dr. Hoff's input.

The resources in Florence are incredible — two Us TOO Florence meetings per month, each almost always having a urologist present to answer questions and then the support group available at our beck and call.

Utilizing these resources helped us zero in on our choice of treatments with a minimum of wasted time and effort.

Next month: our decision and going forward.

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Light Up a Life this December with PeaceHealth

Peace Harbor Hospice hosts its annual Light Up a Life ceremony on Saturday, Dec. 12, from 2 to 3:30 p.m., at the Florence Events Center.

Funds raised at this event will go to support a variety of hospice programs throughout the year.

The event allows anyone to purchase a star in remembrance of someone who has passed away or to honor someone who has made a difference in their life. All are welcome, whether or not your loved one was on hospice.

Admission to the event is free. A tree decorated with the stars of names that are being honored will be lit.

Refreshments and music will be provided.

If you would like to recognize someone special in your life you can make a donation to PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Hospice, 400 Ninth Street, and a star will be hung with the recognition given to your loved one on this special day during the "reading of the names" ceremony.

Contributions are tax deductible; 100 percent of contribution to Light Up A Life remains in Florence to benefit PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Hospice program, a nonprofit organization.

For more information about PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Hospice or the annual Light Up a Life celebration, call 541-997-3418.

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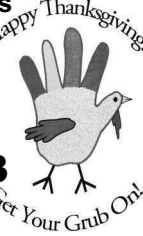


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