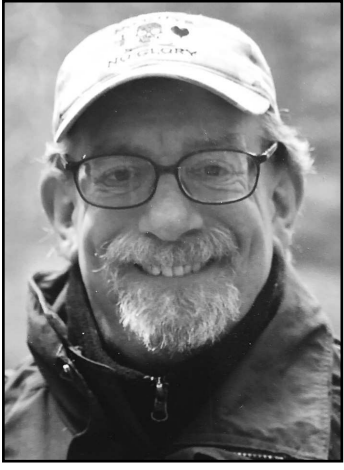


# Siuslaw News Community Voices

NOTES FROM THE SILTCOOS —

## Sweet confusion of the 25-mile curve



**BARRY SOMMER**  
Special to Siuslaw News

Recently we had the fortune of being bathed in the light of a supermoon. From dusk to dawn it shone like a medalion on the chest of the universe, larger than usual and brighter than most of the stars that surround it. I met my best friend before daybreak at the pullout along

Highway 101, just north of Sea Lion Caves, to watch him photograph this natural wonder. Usually, I don't go out that early because it's dark, cold and I don't want to. But in this instance, long-time friendship took precedence over warmth. For about an hour, as the sky-lightened pictures were taken, the moon hung above the sea as the clouds wafted across its shining face. All the while, shifting atmospheres changed colors from pink to orange to purple to grey. It was a devastating beauty. Even though I have observed this spectacle many times in the past, I was struck at its miracle as if it was the first time. "At this height we can see the curve of the earth!" I

exclaimed to my friend, and pointed westward towards the bands of orange and purple hovering over the farthest horizon. I gestured from left to right in a sweeping arc of almost 180 degrees, from the fog shrouded north jetty and the city to my left, to Heceta Lighthouse and its encircling beam to the right. I remarked that with this wide a view, the curve of Earth becomes obvious. Highlighted by the bands of color and the position of the moon, I began to ponder whether there were any members of the Flat Earth Society willing to respond to the evidence before me. I stood there transfixed, just staring at that "terra curvilinear" as it steadily morphed in tone and hue until the light of the sun washed the multi-hued strata

away and into the light blue of morning. With the marine layer now a wisp of its former self and the azure of the sky making its way to the horizon, the arched earth defined itself as a thin, distinct line 25 miles from the overlook. Science says I should not be able to see any kind of curve unless I am at 35,000 feet in altitude; anyone flying commercial airlines has seen it. So what was I seeing then? A mirage? Science and history may have vindicated me. Well, ancient Greek scientists anyway. It is reported that those inquisitive Greeks noticed that ships approaching showed their masts first and then gradually the hull would appear. This, they concluded, must

mean the earth is round. It is accepted by science today that the visible horizon is 25 miles from the observer, thus we can conclude this is the distance at which the Greeks first saw the ship masts. If the Greeks could see this phenomenon sans binoculars, then we can see the curve as well. As long as the field of view is 25 miles and the surface you are looking out over is perfectly flat, the curve is there. Try it yourself by going to the overlook just north of Sea Lion Caves on a clear day and look directly west. Don't focus on the horizon. Let your eye relax and your peripheral vision will kick in. Kind of like looking at one of those pictures of dots and spots where, when you let your vision unfocus, you see an image of dogs

playing poker. You will perceive and then see clearly a slight but distinct curve stretching all the way from far north to far south. A bit humbling, isn't it? Even if my mind has finally gone and seeing what is not there has become the norm, to me it is the believing that gives meaning to how grand the scheme of our existence is. I am but one man peering into the mist and sky and earth, trying desperately to figure it all out. The ability to understand may be slight, but to feel connected to — and embraced by the essence — makes for sweet confusion. I may not be able to see the other side, but I am ready for another curve.

US TOO PROSTATE CANCER SUPPORT —

## 'By the way, you have prostate cancer'



**BY MARK WETZEL**  
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.

My wife, Linda, and I came to Florence from Delaware in 2015. My encounter with prostate cancer began during an evaluation to become a candidate for a lung transplant.

In 2014, I was diagnosed with interstitial lung disease that progressed to end stage by early 2017. During the evaluation interview at St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center in Phoenix, Ariz., I told the transplant team pulmonologist that I had a familial link with prostate cancer. My uncle died from the disease; my older brother has prostate cancer and opted for surgery several years ago. My prostate specific antigen level, PSA, went from 4.0 — the upper limit for normal at age 60 — to 4.4. The transplant team was concerned about cancer. Immunosuppressant drugs used post-transplant can accelerate growth rates for some cancers. The rules were recently changed to allow prostate cancer patients to be accepted for transplant, pending diagnosis and a treatment plan. I attended several meetings

of the Florence Us TOO support group. Dr. Bryan Mehlhaff of the Oregon Urology Institute attended to present new information and answer questions. Bob Horney and the group let me take over the meeting to discuss my unique situation. It was a cathartic experience and Dr. Mehlhaff was interested in my case regarding lung transplantation and prostate cancer. Subsequently, I had a consult with Dr. Brady Walker at OUI. Dr. Mehlhaff had relayed the information from the Us TOO meeting to Dr. Walker, so he was familiar with my special case. A prostate biopsy was ordered in May. At OUI, I was prepped, and Dr. Walker loaded the sample gun and fired. I felt a slight sting and he declared, "One down, eleven to go!" (Urologist humor.) Twelve core samples were

taken, six on each side of the prostate gland. The pathology showed that I had a confined, non-aggressive form of prostate cancer with Gleason score 7 (3+4). Under normal circumstances, we would have done active surveillance or hormone treatment; testosterone reduction with a leuprolide shot which shrinks the prostate and starves cancer cells of testosterone "food." My professional technical background had educated me in how to search and assess the literature. A literature search on the Internet found a small collection of journal articles that showed no definitive correlation between organ transplants and an acceleration of prostate cancer cell growth. However, the transplant team wanted me to have treatment before being accepted into the program. Surgery was not possible with the state of my lung dis-

ease; there was a high risk with anesthesia when using supplemental oxygen. Dr. Walker recommended that I undergo Image Guided Radiation Therapy (IGRT.) More importantly, he included in his report to the transplant team that treatment be delayed until after surgery. Urologist and oncologist consultations in Phoenix concurred with his recommendation — and the St. Joseph's team agreed that we could wait until after the transplant to start IGRT. In June, I had the surgery for a double lung transplant in Phoenix, receiving a gift of life from a donor. Over the next three months, I recovered in the competent hands of the transplant team. Linda and I then returned to Florence in October. I started my 45 days of radiation therapy at OUI on Oct. 30, 2017, graduated on Jan. 5, 2018, and had the pleasure of riding the won-

derful Friends of Florence bus every single day. So far, so good. Us TOO Florence has been critical in helping me through the entire process from evaluation to the decision of what to do and where to go and into the therapy itself. The group meetings are invaluable in learning from others about their individual experiences and outcomes. (Thanks guys!) Having the OUI urologists attend meetings provides information and insights that enabled me with an engineer's mind to learn about treatment options, the technology used, probable outcome and potential side effects. Bob Horney has been a great resource and advocate. Thanks Bob for your leadership! More to come from the new masked man in town, Mark Wetzel.

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