

***My “New” Personal Journey – A crazy and unanticipated adventure – A Short Story***

When retiring in 2013 after 45 years of dedicated work it was (and still is) my intension to have new adventures in Thailand and seek out exciting journeys now I have time on my hands. Living in Chiang Mai and spending a few years building our new home and garden, getting pet friendly and trying to figure out life that did not involve working from 9 -5 was the only plan that I had in mind.

Life is never what you expect it seems and after a medical check-up last year for new health insurance there were some results that indicated further testing was needed. Hey what – I am healthy! A long journey of testing, follow ups and double checking has resulted in a finding - which has not pleased me! Those who know me would probably say that I am usually forthright, open and – generally matter of fact. I have chosen to share this challenging event with my friends – because it helps me and provides an awareness of this disease that is important for other men?

*Prostate cancer* (PCa) has managed to take a liking to me and my prostate. I expect it has been lurking for some years down there. Lots of facts and figures around about this disease and treatment options but it is very much an individual prognosis and treatment plan for each man. Prostate cancer is the second most common cancer in men worldwide and even when successful, treatment can take a toll on your physical and mental health. I have taken a step back from the diagnosis and am trying to approach this calmly and logically knowing that this disease can have varied outcomes. So my facts!

Not that that there is good news about this thing, but my prognosis is not too bad. It is apparently an intermediate grade (unfavourable) cancer stage that does not, at this point, appear to have spread –but surgery will confirm this. So curability through aggressive treatment is recommended and will be the way ahead for me. I have made a judgment that it is better to get this thing out of me, to be free, to get the cancer out. It was rather upsetting and in many ways is and will be life-changing.

I will be having a robotic radical prostatectomy in Bangkok on the 25 April – Australian Anzac Day as it turns out, so this will be a “*day to remember* – *for battles fought and won”*. So taking a positive outlook on a positive future that has a prognosis for a curable outcome – its full steam ahead – to cure the beast. My motto: *“cancer is my bitch and I am going to beat it”*. The results from surgery and pathology will tell me how well that expected outcome is likely to be achieved. I have a very qualified surgeon with years of experience and the largest and most up to date hospital in Bangkok to deal with this – so I am positive and hope you will be too.

A lot of men don’t seem to discuss their disease and treatment openly for some reason? It’s not something to be shy or secret about our ashamed of from my perspective. Many men – both every day and famous - have survived this disease and the journey through curative treatment. I intend to follow them. The treatment side-effects are understood (and are gross) and I think the worst part of this whole mess because of the potential impact on the quality of life. But better crappy side effects than the other option – live for today as they say….!

I recognise that PCa affects your partner, family as well as friends and support is important. My partner and family have been so tremendous to me on this private journey and without their help it would be a far greater struggle. I am sure the recovery phase will also be interesting!

I have recognised that managing PCa is a battle and I have invested the time and energy necessary to empower myself with the knowledge needed to make informed choices about my path of treatment. I have a strategy, the best medical team and am fighting back with the support of everyone.

Thanks for listening to my ramblings – it helps to rationalise this through dialogue. Speaking about it is also *an awareness piece and my attempt to highlight it for other men* out there – one just never knows without screening tests.

I will be in Bangkok for a few weeks for surgery from the 22nd April and initial recovery. Then back to Chiang Mai around the 9th May for recovery over the weeks that follow…. cross your fingers for me! I have never been a quitter and don’t intend to start now - so onward with this battle.

Cheers to life ……good luck with that. ...it’s all good from here on!

Ron

***Tranquil*** (still) ***in Thailand***

***PS*** *– I am also looking forward to sharing some great news soon about a new opportunity for me – I can hardly wait, but sworn to silence at the moment!*