

I had just come out of the shower when my ever inquisitive wife asked about the "bump" on my chest. I told her "oh that thing", I believed it was the results of a wrestling session I had with our 15 year old son. We were always playing around when he was younger but now he was maturing and gaining too much strength and wearing me out. My wife suggested that I get it looked at by my primary doctor. I said not to worry it will probably go away in time. A few weeks later the lump was slightly bigger and my right nipple had inverted.

I paid a visit to Dr. Jennings and he referred me to Dr. Torres- Solich for a biopsy. The results of the biopsy showed some "irregular cells" and he scheduled a lumpectomy to confirm that there was cancer present. This was devastating to me. To think, that an ex-athlete/football player full of testosterone could possibly have a woman's disease. Paraphrase the thought it must be a mistake. Well, the lumpectomy was scheduled in October 2003. The results were not encouraging. It seems the lump was cancerous and the cancer may have spread outside the exterior wall of the lump. And during the prep work prior to the operation a concern was expressed regarding my EKG and I would be required to visit a cardiologist before anything else could be done.

The cardiologist ran me through a series of tests on and off the treadmill. At the end he said that they could not determine if there was a problem and that the only way to know for sure was an angiogram. Thus, I was sent to another office for this final procedure. It turns out that the process involves inserting a tiny camera in my aorta located in my groin area. Everything starts with a localized anesthetic prior to the insertion of the camera and connecting wire. I guess the localization was out of my zip-code because the next thing I know I am screaming in agony and almost off the table. After only a few minutes the Doctor leaned over me to say he could find nothing wrong.

November 11, 2003 was my "mastectomy day". A date that also happens to be Veteran's Day and the same date I returned from overseas in the military in 1964. Dr Torres-Solich had thoroughly explained the procedure to me outlining that my nipple would go away and I would become a one nipple man from here on out. I toyed with the idea of a tattoo but thought that too vain. The good doctor suggested an implant and reconstruction surgery but that did not appeal because it was like taking a 1954 Ford and trying to making it look like a 2009 Bentley. The good Dr removed the affected area along with 23 lymph nodes. Only one was cancerous and it was very small. The surgery was successful but I knew it would be because Dr Torres-Solich is of Puerto Rican descent. Who could be more skilled with a scalpel than a young man that has played with knives his entire life? His skill saved my life.

Following surgery and the embarrassment of telling family and friends that I had a "woman's" disease it was time to meet my assigned oncologist Dr. Sara Garido. Dr Sara is a petit lady with a thoroughness that NASA could use. After checking me out and putting me on the obligatory 5 year Tamoxifen plan. I was put through test after test. I then realized how fortunate I was to be assigned to such a perfectionist from Columbia. Who is more capable or knowledgeable about dispensing the right drugs than a Columbian.

Five and ½ years later I am doing fine except for a touch of prostate cancer that was cured by Dr. Maria Rodriguez from Brazil, haven't figured that connection out yet.

The 3 months of chemo for breast cancer and 43 weeks of radiation for prostate cancer have rewarded me with a recent diagnosis of leukemia. Just another little bump in the road. Actually, I feel very good and would continue that trend if the Drs would stop giving me cancer diagnosis.