

LARRY E. MAY
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LIVING WITH CANCER

THANKFULLY, MY CANCER IS SLOW MOVING. BASAL CELL CARCINOMA IS THE MOST COMMON SKIN CANCER IN THE UNITED STATES. FAIR-SKINNED PEOPLE OVER FIFTY YEARS OLD ARE MOST AFFECTED. NINETY PERCENT OCCUR ON THE FACE.

FORTUNATELY, BASAL CELL CARCINOMAS VIRTUALLY NEVER METASTASIZE (SPREADS TO OTHER PARTS OF THE BODY) UNLESS TREATED, THE GROWTH GRADUALLY INVADES AND BITES DEEPER INTO SURROUNDING TISSUES. DIRECT SKIN DAMAGE FROM ULTRAVIOLET RADIATION CONTAINED IN SUNLIGHT IS THOUGHT TO BE THE CAUSE IN MOST CASES.

BASAL CELL CARCINOMA CAN BE DESTROYED BY VARIOUS METHODS. SMALL AFFECTED AREAS ARE FROZEN, PAINFUL FOR A SHORT TIME LEAVING BRIGHT RED SPOTS ALL OVER YOUR FACE. SURGICAL EXCISION (DIGGING OUT THE TUMOR) USUALLY GIVES A COMPLETE CURE. STITCHES MAYBE NEEDED. IN ONE CASE ON MY NOSE, I HAD A SKIN GRAFT PERFORMED. A PIECE OF SKIN FROM BEHIND MY RIGHT EAR WAS PLACED DIRECTLY ON MY NOSE. I ALSO HAD RADIATION THERAPY. A NEVER ENDING BATTLE.

THERE HAS BEEN ONE BLESSING IN DISGUISE. EVERY FEW MONTHS, I'M DRIVEN TO BAKERSFIELD FOR TREATMENT. A TWO HOUR TRIP EACH WAY FROM LANCASTER. EITHER INTERSTATE FIVE (S) OVER THE "GRAPEVINE" (TEJON PASS - ELEVATION 4,100 FEET) OR THROUGH MOUTAIN AND TEHACHAPI (HIGHWAY 58). I HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THE "REAL WORLD."

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THE NEW CARS, RESTAURANTS, PEOPLE IN GENERAL AND PRETTY SCENERY. OVER THE YEARS, I'VE NOTICED A HUGE INCREASE IN THE HOMELESS POPULATION. CAMPED NEAR FREEWAY ON/OFF RAMPS AND ROAMING THE STREETS PICKING UP RECYCLABLE ITEMS FOR CASH.

MY BASAL CELL CARCINOMA SKIN CANCER IS SOMEWHAT MANAGEABLE. THE PRISON DOCTORS REALIZE THE SEVERITY OF THE SITUATION AND SCHEDULE ME TO VISIT THE DERMATOLOGIST ACCORDINGLY.

BESIDES MY APPEARANCE BEING ALTERED AFTER THE PROCEDURES, I'M HAPPY THE CANCER DIDN'T SPREAD AND IT HAS BEEN CONTAINED. OTHER "SPOTS" WILL APPEAR, IT IS JUST A MATTER OF TIME.

I'VE OVER TWO DOZEN APPOINTMENTS AT THE SAME LOCATION IN BAKERSFIELD. THE DERMATOLOGIST STARTED OUT CALLING ME MISTER MAY. THEN, LAWRENCE AND NOW, HE CALLS ME LARRY! DARRIN TAKES PRIDE IN HIS WORK AND DOES AN EXCELLENT JOB.

I'VE DECIDED JUST TO ACCEPT BASAL CELL CARCINOMA AS PART OF MY LIFE AND DEAL WITH IT.