

FIRST STRIKE: A Vietnam War Veteran and Prostate Cancer Survivor

Bill Ward

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ABSTRACT

Mr. Bill Ward is Native community health advocate with a personal goal of enhancing cancer knowledge among American Indian men regarding screening. As a cancer survivor and a veteran, Mr. Ward provides essential stories in creating a supportive environment in both prevention and survivorship. Bill's story in his own words that follow were intended to share as an outreach activity supported by Spirit of Eagles, Community Networks Program (NCI U54 153605).

KEYWORDS: Prostate, cancer, survivor, veterans

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The First Strike: I like to use the Frist Strike analogy from a military perspective to define my battle with prostate cancer. I do this in my way, my words, to share a difficult story that I hope resonates with others.

Reconnaissance:

At the start of my battle with prostate cancer, I noticed some pain in the most sacred part of my body. My training as a soldier has never allowed the enemy the first shot at taking me out. By instinct, I preferred to be the aggressor as opposed to sitting back and being the defender. This is where my first strike occurred- getting checked by the doctor. I would relate my next steps of further investigation of this pain and its cause to a Reconnaissance (Recon) phase. It was during Recon that I began to understand and strategize against my enemy. This first strike was a pro-active move intended to subvert the enemy's attempt to succeed by using the element of surprise, all the while, advancing slowly in order to make it difficult for me to win this long battle.

Preparing for Combat:

Conferring with my allies and ultimately getting a prostate biopsy based on the PSA (Prostate-Specific Antigen) blood test reading, I was able to catch my enemy at an early stage. With further research and consultation with my Recon team that included experts and those I trusted, i.e., doctors and family; I was presented with all available weapons of choice in terms of helping me win this battle. All this information, while overwhelming, increased my confidence as I prepared to go into combat.

From the onset, my training and personality prevented me from implementing a "watch and wait" approach. I had no interest in gauging how aggressive the enemy was going to be, or if it would retreat.

Going into Battle:

In fact, it was of little interest to me to engage in the equivalent of a "fire fight" by using radioactive treatment options. That was a personal choice, for

I knew I had to do something that would give me complete peach of mind. Therefore I opted to use my own choice of weapon, a bomb called the DaVinci robotic-assisted surgical machine for a radical prostatectomy.

After the "bomb" was dropped, the Radical Surgery tissue samples were sent to the hospital's Department of Pathology to evaluate and assess for the presence of cancer cells "my enemy" outside the prostate gland. Upon analysis, it was determined that indeed there were no cancer cells outside of territory-the prostate. When you are engaged in a battle for life, superior firepower is a game changer and is exactly what I chose to use in order to win this battle against the Prostate Cancer.

Debriefing Highlights:

Early detection of the disease allowed me to catch and defeat the enemy before it spread to a larger area and possibly outside of my prostate. Remaining alert to changes in my body, and ready to act when threatened, and entering my battle with a skilled and supportive Recon team proved essential"

THAT VICTORY IS NOW 13 YEARS OLD.

Don't let the enemy catch you sleeping!

Man-up and get yourself checked.

"Nothing comes to a sleeper but a dream, and sometimes it's a bad dream." Get checked!!

Editor comment:

The voice of survivors is crucial to improving cancer awareness, early detection and successful treatment for Native American cancer patients. Bill Ward is a wonderful advocate. His take-home message is to seek out the best information and choose a treatment that fits your personal situation and goals. His choice may not be every man's nor every Native man's choice but the story is supportive of doing what is necessary to become a strong fighter "survivor". JSKaur, Guest Editor