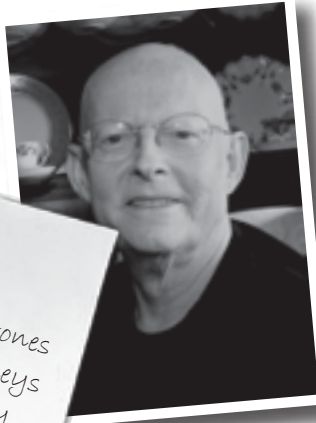


Dr. Mark McClure



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Walking *Life's Path*

By Mark McClure, MD
Medical Editor

One of the profound blessings for me as a physician is to repeatedly have the opportunity to walk side by side with patients on their life journeys.

Bob Anderson was one such patient who allowed me to share his spiritual journey. He came to me in the prime of life, a highly successful, globe-trotting corporate executive who simply didn't have the time to be sick. "What do you mean my PSA is elevated? I've got too much going on in my life right now to deal with this," he said in a bit of a rant.

NEW KIND OF JOURNEY

When we discovered, after a biopsy, that he did indeed have cancer, we had a quiet talk. "There are some things we can control," I remember saying, "and some things we can't. Stress is one of the things in life we can control." But he made it clear that his work was a major part of his life, and he had no intention of stepping back from it.

And so he began a new kind of journey that required, first, acceptance of the diagnosis of prostate cancer. Men who refuse to accept the call say quite simply they plan to make no changes in their lives and will accept what may lie ahead. Others accept the call and begin an adventure that will change their lives forever.

After fits and starts, Bob Anderson accepted the call, and in doing so, he made me a better physician. Prostate cancer is a special interest of mine; I keep up with the literature, and have even written a book about it. But Bob Anderson pressed me

hard to become even more knowledgeable. In Bob Anderson fashion, when he accepted the call he read everything he could find about prostate cancer. He sought out the best experts in the world, and traveled extensively to meet with them.

As he continued on his journey, one step after another, he began to sense that his illness was an opportunity as well as a challenge. He reached out in multiple ways. He became the leader of a local support group, and made sure it was organized and run effectively—just as he had done in his corporate life. He set up a ministry for men with prostate cancer to provide support and information.

Of great lasting benefit, he also established a non-profit statewide foundation, the Prostate Cancer Coalition of North Carolina, which continues to play a vital education role. His beloved daughter was his web mistress in building www.pccnc.org.

It would be true to say that for many, many months, his voice in support of prostate cancer education and prevention was the loudest, clearest, and most effective in our state—and it is still effective today.

UNsung HEROES

There are many milestones for all of us on our journeys through life. For me, my patients are my unsung heroes. The path for each person is unique. As his illness became fully integrated into his life, Bob Anderson became an inspiration to so many. In his personal life, with his wife and family and friends, he lived life fully. He was not sitting waiting to die, he was fully engaged.

He also was a man who knew what he wanted in all parts of his life. He wrote his own funeral service, which honored his military service. When

the last bugle note resounded throughout the church where his ashes were interred, a little butterfly danced into that space, flitted about, then disappeared. It took my breath away. Now when I see a butterfly, I can't help but think of my patient and my friend, Bob Anderson. He's a memorable patient who will be held in my memory forever.

PATH TO UROLOGY

I reflect at times on my own path that has led me to the privilege and honor of working with patients such as Bob Anderson on an every-day basis. And I remember when the seed was planted, an image that is still crystal clear.

I was at a family reunion in Indiana, and very rapidly and suddenly I became about as sick as a 10-year-old can be, with a temperature of 105 and anguish in all parts of my being. That evening my father took me to our family doctor, who pulled out his stethoscope, listened to my chest, looked in my throat, and wrote a little script on a pad of paper. The antibiotics he prescribed for pneumococcal pneumonia gave me a new lease on life within 24 hours. To me, that was a miracle.

Two years later, I went to this same doctor because I felt sure I was losing my hearing. He quickly found wax impacted in both ears, and with a little washing restored my ability to hear. Another miracle!

Those events set me on this path. When I finished medical school, I moved toward a residency in urology with great enthusiasm, because, as they say in baseball, "it touched all the bases." I love surgery, and urology offers many opportunities to help patients through surgical intervention, from dealing with malignant diseases such as prostate cancer to offering relief from incontinence, and so much more. Urologic surgery has been revolutionized by striking advances in diagnostic imaging and laparoscopic surgical techniques—and it is my challenge (which I welcome) to stay abreast of cutting edge technologies as they become available.

And so I enjoy endoscopic and reconstructive surgery, for both men and women, and I love working with patients of all ages, in an office setting. Urology has proven to be a perfect choice for me. When I combined my medical/urologic training with an abiding and growing interest in holistic and alternative therapies, my ability to serve my patients increased many times over. **hkh**