

The logo for 'BOB tales' features the text 'BOB' in a large, bold, dark blue font, followed by 'tales' in a smaller, dark blue font. To the right of the text is a red balloon with a white string. The background consists of light blue and green wavy lines.

# BOB tales

Brotherhood of the Balloon Member Newsletter | **March/April 2024**

“Pray until your situation changes. Miracles happen every day, so never stop believing.”

- Unknown

Dear Members (a note from Deb Hickey):

Many of you are aware that I’ve been grappling with a condition known as corneal neuropathy, a rare form of small fiber neuropathy. It causes severe pain, aching, and burning in both of my eyes. According to my doctors, I have an overactive immune system that’s mistakenly targeting and attacking my corneal nerves.

Despite trying more than 30 medications and enduring 15 treatments and procedures over the past two years, my condition continued to progress. Earlier this year, my doctors told me the only option I had left to try, and one they were confident would help, was intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG) treatment. The problem? My neurologist prescribed one weekly treatment for three months (to start!), *each* costing \$9,720 (!), yet my insurer refused to cover it.

Since my father has consistently emphasized his profound belief in the power of prayer, in a [recent newsletter](#) he asked our thousands of readers to pray for me. After its distribution, I received a flood of compassionate messages from members as well as friends and even strangers. I felt supported and encouraged.

And so, after exhausting appeals with my insurance company, I put all my energy into compiling a meticulous and exhaustive packet of information to present to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for independent external review. Though many on my medical team as well as two lawyers told me the external review was “just protocol” and there was “no way the denial would be overturned at this stage,” I figured it was my last chance and I had nothing to lose. So I compiled all my relevant medical records; wrote a compelling personal plea; researched, printed, and included all of the studies and articles referenced in my doctors’ letters; and topped it off with a cover letter at the beginning and a thank you note at the end.

I was told I'd have an answer within 45 days. While I waited, I made a conscious effort to maintain low expectations so I wouldn't feel too defeated when I received another rejection. Meanwhile, I explored every other possible avenue in pursuit of IVIG treatment, including contacting all 10 IVIG drug manufacturers directly and reaching out to local TV stations to see if they'd be interested in my story.

About six weeks later, a woman from the infusion pharmacy called (for the third time) to ask if I'd found the means to afford the treatment and if she could proceed with setting up a schedule for an in-home nurse to administer the IV. Mildly irritated, I detailed to her my latest efforts, letting her know I had yet to make any headway.

As we talked, I unconsciously opened the front door and reached into my postbox to collect the day's mail. Shuffling through the envelopes, I stopped at one bearing the return address of the state agency hired to review my case. I tore open the envelope and scanned the letter.

To my complete surprise, instead of the expected "no," I was met with the revelation: *The decision of the Health Plan is overturned.* I had to read it three times before it registered. Even Pharmacy Lady was shocked. "That almost never happens!" She said excitedly.

I believe the prayers of our members/readers as well as my family and friends helped make this happen, and I'm eternally grateful. I had my first four-hour IVIG infusion a month ago and although I've had some pretty awful side effects and haven't yet noticed a difference in my pain, I am hopeful. Stay tuned . . . and please keep the prayers coming.

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In this double issue of *BOB Tales*, we're excited to announce the inauguration of a pioneering scientific prototype combining full-body MRI with proton therapy for cancer treatment, marking a global milestone in radiotherapy. We also present findings from a new study indicating that increased intake of nutritious plant-based foods correlates with improved quality-of-life scores among prostate cancer patients. We discuss recent research that indicates that food emulsifiers may disrupt gut bacteria balance and influence the body's metabolism, potentially leading to chronic inflammation and heightened susceptibility to specific cancers. Next, we detail results from a new study examining the connections between fluctuations in cardiorespiratory fitness and the occurrence and mortality rates of prostate cancer, aiming to provide more targeted prevention guidelines. And, in the final article in our "In the News" section, we introduce an innovative new apparel line, which includes radiation resistant underwear. Yes, really!

In our “Health” section, learn the truth about whether you really need to rinse fruits and veggies before eating them. And we give you the dirty truth about wearing shoes inside your house. In our “Odds and Ends” section, we include a scary new way criminals are becoming more sophisticated in their quest to steal your money. And there’s much more.

We welcome any suggestions you have on improving the value of the *BOB Tales* to our members. Please send your feedback to [DHickey@protonbob.com](mailto:DHickey@protonbob.com).

Deb Hickey

P.S. You may think I’m lying about retrieving the mail and finding the denial reversal letter while I was on the phone with the infusion Pharmacy Lady, but it’s true!



- [MRI-guided Proton Therapy Could be Game Changer](#)
- [Plant-based Diet May Help Maintain Urinary, Bowel and Sexual Function After Prostate Cancer Treatment](#)
- [Food Emulsifiers Linked to Increased Prostate and Breast Cancer Risk](#)
- [More Evidence that Exercise Helps Prevent Prostate Cancer](#)
- [Radiation Resistant Underwear – Really?](#)
- [Do You Really Need to Rinse Fruit and Veggies Before Eating?](#)
- [The Dirty Truth: Shoes Inside the House](#)



# MRI-guided Proton Therapy Could be Game Changer

Physicians and scientists in Dresden recently [unveiled a prototype](#) for real-time MRI-guided proton therapy, marking the global debut of combining full-body MRI imaging with proton therapy. This innovation is set to revolutionize cancer treatment, drawing expertise from multiple fields. The inauguration ceremony, attended by Saxony's Minister-President, showcased the culmination of efforts, including previous prototypes that demonstrated technical feasibility.

The goal of this new form of radiotherapy is to enhance the precision of proton therapy by monitoring patients in real-time during treatment. The advantage of using real-time imaging lies in its ability to visualize tumors with higher contrast, allowing better distinction from healthy tissue and more accurate definition of the irradiation volume.

Real-time MRI imaging can also detect changes in volume between radiation sessions, enabling immediate adjustments to the proton beam application. It also visualizes tumor movement during radiation, synchronizing it with the application.

Prof. Aswin Hoffmann at OncoRay National Center for Radiation Research in Oncology emphasizes the prototype's ability to visualize moving tumors with high-contrast imaging. The rotating MRI device enables innovative patient positioning for proton therapy in various positions.

Future studies will showcase the prototype's value for visualizing mobile tumors in the chest, abdomen, and pelvis.

## news briefs

### [New IL Law Ensures Fair Coverage for Proton Therapy](#)

Earlier this year, Illinois saw the enactment of Public Act 103-0325, a significant step forward in making proton therapy accessible to patients covered by state-sponsored insurance plans.

The act stipulates two clear mandates: 1) Insurance coverage for cancer treatment must not impose stricter clinical evidence standards for proton therapy than for other radiation therapies; and 2) Radiation oncology coverage by insurers must include medically necessary proton therapy for cancer treatment.

These provisions are designed to protect patients, guaranteeing they have access to optimal care as prescribed by their healthcare providers. The unanimous bipartisan backing for this legislation sets an inspiring precedent, fostering ongoing efforts to promote wider availability of proton therapy in both federal and state arenas.

# Plant-Based Diet Tied to Improved Urinary, Bowel and Sexual Health Post Prostate Cancer Treatment

A recent [study](#) conducted by researchers at NYU Grossman School of Medicine and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health suggests that adopting a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, grains, and nuts while limiting meat and dairy intake may alleviate common side effects experienced by prostate cancer patients. The analysis involved over 3,500 men with prostate cancer and focused on the impact of a plant-based diet on post-treatment quality of life issues.



Participants were categorized into five groups based on their consumption of plant versus animal foods. Those in the group with the highest plant consumption showed 8 to 11 percent better scores in sexual function compared to those with the lowest consumption. Similarly, urinary health scores were up to 14 percent better in the high plant consumption group, showing fewer instances of incontinence, obstruction, and irritation. Additionally, hormonal health scores were up to 13 percent better in the highest quintile of plant-based diet compared to the lowest.

## [Insurance Delays and Denials Impede Vital Cancer Treatment](#)

Cancer is a disease where the timing of treatment can significantly impact outcomes. Recent studies emphasize that for cancer patients, delaying treatment by just one week can increase the risk of death by 1.2 percent to 3.2 percent. Nonetheless, the process of prior authorization, which is commonly required by health insurance providers, presents substantial obstacles to accessing effective cancer care.

Health insurance providers are frequently slow to recognize the research supporting more expensive treatments, such as proton therapy, leading to a high rate of claim denials. Insurance approval for patients in clinical trials is also often slow and complex due to payer reluctance, limiting access to advanced cancer therapies, which could greatly improve outcomes.

The National Association for Proton Therapy is working to reform the broken prior authorization process, aiming to streamline it, reduce delays, and ensure timely access to life-saving treatments for patients.

Dr. Stacy Loeb, the lead author of the study and a urologist at NYU Langone Health, emphasized that these findings provide hope for improving the quality of life for prostate cancer survivors, suggesting that incorporating more fruits and vegetables while reducing meat and dairy could be a straightforward step to take.

Previous research by the same team had already indicated that a plant-based diet might reduce the risk of developing prostate cancer in the first place.

This study, published in the journal *Cancer*, is believed to be the first of its kind to demonstrate better urinary health in prostate cancer patients based on nutrition.

The research utilized data from the Health Professionals Follow-Up Study, which includes information on more than 50,000 male healthcare professionals. Participants reported their dietary habits and health concerns regularly over several years. Most participants had received prostate cancer treatment, and all had localized disease with no metastasis.

The study found that regardless of demographic factors or medical history, consuming high amounts of plant-based foods was associated with better sexual health, urinary health, vitality, and bowel function.

Dr. Loeb noted the need for further research involving more diverse patient populations and those with advanced stages of the disease.

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## Food Emulsifiers Linked to Increased Prostate Cancer Risk

[New research](#) suggests that emulsifiers in food may harm the balance of bacteria in the gut and affect the body's metabolism. This could cause long-term inflammation, thereby increasing the risk of developing certain cancers.

**emulsifier** / e·mul·si·fi·er: *noun*

- Widely used food additives that improve texture, enhance shelf-life, and assist in blending ingredients that don't naturally mix, such as oil and water
- Commonly present in various prepackaged and processed foods including mayonnaise, chocolate, ice cream, and peanut butter



For this study, researchers sought to explore connections between emulsifiers in food additives and the risk of cancer in a large group of people over time.

After examining the health records of 92,000 adults, and considering factors such as age and weight, they discovered a higher likelihood of prostate and breast cancers in individuals who consumed greater amounts of processed foods containing emulsifiers.

Although this connection was based on observations rather than biochemical evidence, the researchers argue that their findings contribute to the ongoing discussion regarding regulations for ultra-processed foods.

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## More Evidence that Exercise Helps Prevent Prostate Cancer



Unlike other common cancers such as breast, colon, and lung cancer, there are relatively few preventable factors with strong evidence for reducing the likelihood of developing prostate cancer. Obesity is a major risk factor for advanced prostate cancer, but the evidence doesn't extend to non-advanced cases.

### New Focus on Prostate Cancer

While the impact of physical activity on various cancers is established, evidence for prostate cancer specifically has been inconclusive. Studies show conflicting findings on the relationship between cardiorespiratory fitness (CRF) and prostate cancer risk, however examining changes in CRF over time may provide clarity regarding its role in prostate cancer development.

Notably, previous studies haven't included data on specific cancer types, emphasizing the need for more targeted investigations. In this [new study](#), researchers sought to address this gap by examining the associations between changes in CRF and both the incidence and mortality rates of prostate cancer, aiming to provide more precise recommendations for prevention strategies.

## Time Matters

Researchers analyzed data on 57,652 Swedish men over nearly four decades. The study revealed that those who improved their fitness levels over time were 35 percent less likely to develop prostate cancer. This finding aligns with [recent research](#) suggesting that meeting physical activity guidelines could reduce annual cancer diagnoses in the U.S. by 3 percent, or 46,000 cases.

## A Clearer Link

Despite extensive research on exercise and cancers like breast cancer, less attention has been paid specifically to prostate cancer, despite its increased risk with age and family history. Dr. Kate Bolam, a co-author of the study, noted contradictory findings in previous studies, often due to small sample sizes or biases towards healthier individuals.

Unlike studies relying on self-reported exercise habits, this research used objective fitness test results, providing a clearer link between physical activity and reduced prostate cancer risk. Additionally, it contributes to the broader understanding of the role of exercise in cancer prevention, supported by previous research showing its benefits for various cancers and treatment outcomes.

Although the exact mechanism remains unclear, experts suggest that exercise may enhance the immune system's ability to target and eliminate cancer cells. While the optimal exercise dose and type are still being explored, both the American Cancer Society and the American Society of Clinical Oncology recommend 150 minutes of aerobic exercise per week.

Dr. Bolam and Dr. Neil M. Iyengar, a medical oncologist, recommend starting with enjoyable activities to establish a consistent exercise routine, emphasizing the importance of making physical activity a part of daily life.

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# Radiation Resistant Underwear – Really?

Elyn Jacobs, a breast cancer survivor and holistic cancer strategist, is dedicated to assisting cancer patients in making healthier, less-toxic choices for their healing journey. She emphasizes not only surviving cancer but thriving and reducing the risk of recurrence.



Jacobs serves as a contributing editor for *The Truth About Cancer* and is a member of the Medical Advisory Board for BeatCancer.Org and the Advisory Board for the Radical Remission Project. Previously, she served as the Executive Director of the Emerald Heart Cancer Foundation and hosted the *Survive and Live Well* radio show on the Cancer Support Network.

Another one of Jacobs' many initiatives is a [website](#) where she promotes and sells radiation-proof apparel for men and women. Among the many products she markets are Faraday™ Boxer Briefs, which she sells for \$69 a pair (!).

According to Jacobs, studies have shown cell phones carried close to organs at risk for cancer can induce cancer in that organ. This includes breast cancer in women and prostate cancer in men.

“It only stands to reason that cellphones stored in one’s pocket could be detrimental to one’s privates,” she says. The boxer briefs on her website are made with silver-lining technology that apparently blocks 99 percent of cellphone and Wi-Fi radiation.

Get a [15 percent discount](#) on Lambs radio-protective underwear with the code “ElynJacobs.”



## flashback

*We've been producing BOB Tales newsletters for 23 years. During this time we've published articles that many new members haven't seen, and some older members may have forgotten. So, we periodically re-run articles from past BOB Tales. This one from July 2007 is titled:*

## When Will They Ever Learn?

Those of us who are old enough will remember Peter, Paul and Mary's popular song, *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?* One line in the song repeated over and over is, “When will they ever learn?” We feel the same way about some of the urologists who are counseling their patients on prostate cancer treatment alternatives. Hardly a week goes by when we don't hear from someone who was told by their doctor that proton beam radiation therapy is “new,” or “experimental,” or, “it's a gimmick.”

This week, a new BOB member wrote on his membership application form, “When I told my urologist I was considering proton therapy, he said, ‘Proton is experimental and radiation is radiation.’ ”

Experimental? Proton beam radiation has been used to treat diseases, including cancer, for more than 50 years. More than 50,000 patients have been treated. Five centers in the U.S. treat with protons routinely, and many more are being constructed around the world. Proton therapy is FDA approved and is reimbursed by Medicare and many private insurers.

The laws of physics prove unequivocally that, while the mechanism for killing cancer is the same, proton beam radiation therapy is very different from photon (X-ray) radiation. The simple fact that the proton beam stops at the target site with no exit dose tells you that. And that *fact* points to fewer side effects.

Proton therapy is not new; it's not experimental; and it's quite different from conventional photon radiation. We have about 3,000 members who can attest to that.

As Peter, Paul and Mary sang, "When will they ever learn?"

**BOB Comment:** Remember, this was 17 years ago. Things certainly have changed. Not the least of which is our membership, at 10,000+...



making a difference by giving back

## Contributor Quotes

Every month, we receive a list of members who've made contributions to the Loma Linda University Cancer Center, though we don't know the exact amounts given. We make every attempt to get in touch with everyone on these lists by phone to thank them for their generosity. We love the conversations we have, and we often save some of their comments. Following are a few recent examples.

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*My proton treatment was a key, two-month episode in my life. I'm so thankful for the atmosphere and healing process.*

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*The best thing I ever did for myself was read Bob's book. It saved my life.*

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*The VA was reluctant to even give me a biopsy, but I pushed. When I learned I had prostate cancer and started looking at treatment options, I quickly became overwhelmed with the*

*information I found. But during a church service, I told my pastor about my situation, and he said, 'I had that, and I went to Loma Linda.' It was a sign.*

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*At my age I'm lucky to be vertical.*

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*Lucky to be able to 'kill two birds with one stone' – donate to fund research for the cancer treatment that saved my life and support the organization that keeps me abreast of all the latest imaging and treatment technologies and important health information.*

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*Deb, like you always ask about my health, I hope you know there are a lot of us out here that are concerned for your health and wellbeing. We also care deeply about what you are going through with your eyes. I'm looking forward to seeing something in a future newsletter that says your condition is improving.*

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## Giving Options

- **Online:** [Donate here](#). From the pull-down menu, choose where you'd like to direct your gift — 1) Proton Research through the *James M. Slater Chair*, 2) Proton Research through the *Robert J. Marckini Chair*, or 3) choose "Other" and specify "Cancer Center Vision" or another area where you'd like your gift directed in the space provided.
- **By Check:** Make your check out to "LLUCC." Specify where you'd like to direct your gift in the memo line — 1) *Slater Chair*, 2) *Marckini Chair*, 3) *Cancer Center Vision* or 4) write "unrestricted" so LLUH can use it where it's needed most. Mail your check to: LLUH, Office of Philanthropy P.O. Box 2000, Loma Linda, CA 92354.
- **By Phone:** Call Regina Joseph at 909-558-5010.





## Do You Really Need to Rinse Fruit and Veggies Before Eating?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [says](#) washing your produce under running water can prevent you from consuming harmful germs, like Salmonella, E-coli, and Listeria. Some of these germs can cause food-borne illnesses like norovirus, which is the country's leading cause of disease outbreaks from contaminated food.

In fact, the CDC says all produce – from leafy greens or fresh herbs to firm fruits and veggies – should be washed before eating to remove bacteria, dirt, small bugs, and pesticides.

There's no need to wash produce as soon as you bring it home, though. In fact, washing produce immediately leads to creating an environment where bacteria can thrive and can shorten the shelf-life of produce. Instead, store unwashed fruits and vegetables until you're ready to eat them.

And even watermelon should be scrubbed under running cold water with a produce brush to prevent the knife from dragging bacteria into the flesh when cutting through the outer skin.

Washing fruits and vegetables with soap, detergent, commercial produce wash, bleach solutions or other disinfecting products is not recommended by the CDC. But you can use [baking soda](#) and water as an effective way to remove some pesticides.

If you still think washing your produce is a waste of time, consider one more thing: those pesky fruit flies in your kitchen – where do they come from? They typically come from eggs laid on produce that hatch in your home. Yikes!

Finally, the CDC reports that fruits and vegetables labeled “prewashed” don't need to be washed again at home. However, while not “necessary,” it wouldn't hurt to re-wash them anyway.



# The Dirty Truth: Shoes Inside the House



Your shoes are tracking much more than dirt into your house. Turns out, your clodhoppers harbor fecal germs and diarrhea-inducing bacteria. Your kicks could be dirtier than a public restroom toilet seat!

Even the microbiologist who conducted the [study](#) and came to this conclusion was stunned by the results. Dr. Charles Gerba, also a professor of virology at the University of Arizona, said, “It seems like we step in a lot more poop than I thought.”

For the study, 10 participants were given new shoes to wear every day for two weeks. The shoes were then tested for bacteria. Results showed the outside of the shoes averaged 421,000 units of bacteria, while the inside had just 2,887. Surprisingly, *96 percent* of the shoes showed the presence of fecal bacteria.

According to Gerba, the fecal bacteria “indicates frequent contact with fecal material, which most likely originates from floors in public restrooms or contact with animal fecal material outdoors.”

If you’re not already grossed out, there’s more: the transfer rate of bacteria from the shoes to clean floors ranged from *90 to 99 percent!*

Here’s just a short list of some of the bacteria found on shoes and the infections and conditions they can cause:

- **E. coli** – urinary tract infections and diarrhea
- **Klebsiella pneumoniae** – pneumonia
- **Serratia ficaria** – respiratory tract infections
- **C. diff** – severe diarrhea, stomach pain, inflammation, and life-threatening colon problems
- **Staphylococcus aureus** – infections in the heart
- **Coronavirus** – respiratory issues including severe acute respiratory syndrome

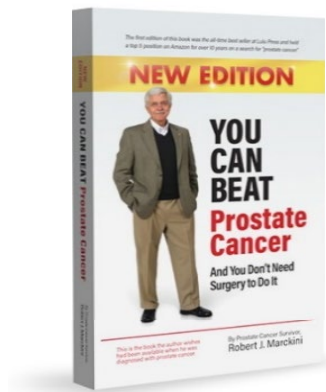
Shoes are one of the biggest sources of infection we walk around with (pun intended). But if you’re still on the fence, or you’ve got a family member who won’t stop wearing his sassy striders around the house, you could always invest in the [UVZone Shoe Sanitizer](#).





the book

# You Can Beat Prostate Cancer: And You Don't Need Surgery to Do It – Second Edition



## Amazon Ranking and Reviews

As of this writing, Bob's book is sandwiched between Dr. Patrick Walsh's two books – No. 2 on Amazon.com's list of more than 6,000 books on a search for "prostate cancer."

The book has 253 reader reviews – most with a five-star rating. Following is an excerpt from a review by "Bud R."



### *A Lifesaver and "Must Read" for Anyone with Prostate Cancer*

*...Marckini's book is more than just a medical guide – it's a lifeline. Having navigated the complexities and uncertainties of prostate cancer myself, I appreciate how he demystifies the condition and its treatment options.*

*His ability to translate medical jargon into understandable language is an excellent service to anyone, newly diagnosed or during treatment. His detailed, yet easily digestible explanations of the different types of therapies and their potential side effects, and what to expect post-treatment, provided clarity during what was, for me, an overwhelming time.*

*What sets this book apart is Mr. Marckini's journey. The candid recounting of his own experience with prostate cancer offers a unique blend of empathy, expertise, and encouragement. This personal touch gave me a sense of companionship and understanding that I needed during my treatment. It's one thing to hear advice from medical professionals but quite another to receive it from someone who has walked the same path...*

# Was Bob's book helpful to you?

If Bob's book was helpful to you and you'd like to help others find it on Amazon, please [write a review](#). *Every single review contributes to the credibility and visibility of the book.*

We're happy to discount books in quantity to anyone who is interested in spreading the word about proton therapy. Just send an email to [DHickey@protonbob.com](mailto:DHickey@protonbob.com).



on the lighter side

## Last Month's Brain Teaser

A boy and a girl are playing poker and there are no wild cards. The girl has a royal straight flush, and the boy has four aces. Who wins the game?

**Answer:** Neither win! The girl's hand, a royal straight flush, would have a 10, jack, queen, king, and ace of the same suit. If the boy has four aces, that would be a total of five aces, and there aren't five aces in a deck of cards.

**Winner:** Grady Burrow of Mountain Brook, AL, is our February brain teaser winner! Grady was treated with proton therapy in 2012 at Loma Linda University Cancer Center.

"I discovered proton therapy through a casual conversation," Grady said. Shortly after he was diagnosed with intermediate-stage prostate cancer, he and his wife Sharon were visiting friends in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. "One of them mentioned proton therapy. I'd never heard of it!"

Since Grady didn't like the idea of surgery or seeds, he was considering traditional radiation, but concerned about side effects. Once he heard about proton therapy, he began researching and liked what he learned.

Grady ultimately chose to be treated in California. "Sharon and I lived in Loma Linda for about eight weeks," Grady said. "It was nice to enjoy a change of scenery for such an extended amount of time. I'd recommend that for anyone who's newly diagnosed."



# New Brain Teaser

From what can you take away the whole and still have some left?

Not that difficult, members. Send your brain teaser answer to [DHickey@protonbob.com](mailto:DHickey@protonbob.com) for a chance to win a signed copy of Bob Marckini's **second edition book**, *You Can Beat Prostate Cancer*.

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## Don't Mess With Old People

I'm 80 years old. This morning, I was in the McDonald's drive-through. The line of cars was quite long, and so was the wait to get to the order window. The young lady in the car behind me started leaning on her horn and mouthing some ugly things because I was taking too long to place my order. So, when I got to the first window, I paid for her order, along with my own.

The cashier must have told her what I'd done, because as we moved up, she leaned out her car window and waved to me while mouthing, "thank you, thank you," probably feeling embarrassed that I'd repaid her rudeness with kindness.

When I got to the second window, I showed the server both receipts, and I took her food too. Now, she has to go back to the end of the queue and start all over again.

Don't mess with old people. We've been around for a long time.

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## Wisdom from Bob Uecker

Sports and broadcasting figure Bob Uecker was addressing a group of people recently and talking about his childhood.

"My dad wanted me to have everything that everybody else had, and I think the first thing he ever bought me was a football. I was very young, and he didn't know a lot about it. He

came from the old country. We tried to pass it and throw it and kick it, and we just couldn't do it. It was very discouraging for him and for me. We almost quit.”

And with his signature, deadpan straight face, Uecker said, “Finally, we had a nice neighbor, who came over and put some air in it. What a difference!

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## Some Things to Ponder

- I'm on two simultaneous diets. I wasn't getting enough food on just one.
- I put my scale in the bathroom corner and that's where the little liar will stay until it apologizes.
- My mind is like an internet browser: I have at least 18 open tabs; three of them are frozen; and I have no clue where the music is coming from.
- My wife says I keep pushing her buttons. If that were true, I would have found mute by now.
- There is no such thing as a grouchy old person. The truth is that once you get old, you stop being polite and start being honest.

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## More Humor...

- This morning, I saw my neighbor talking to her cat. It was obvious the poor woman thought the cat understood her!

When I got home, I told my dog. We laughed a lot.

- I asked my girlfriend when her birthday was. She said March 1st. So, I walked around the room and asked again.
- I arrived early at the restaurant. The manager asked, “Do you mind waiting a bit?” I said, “Of course not.”

“Good,” he said, “Take these drinks to table nine.”



odds & ends

## Super Skimmers: The New Way Criminals Are Stealing Your Money

Criminals are becoming more sophisticated in their quest to steal your hard-earned cash. The latest threat comes in the form of “[shimmers](#),” a high-tech device that’s able to harvest data from chip credit cards.

Unlike traditional skimmers placed on the outside of ATMs, shimmers are installed *inside* the machines, making it nearly impossible for businesses to realize they’ve been targeted. Once customer data is stolen, it’s used to create fake debit cards, enabling criminals to withdraw money from other ATMs.

To combat this rising threat, many banks are adopting high-tech fraud detection software. After Washington State Credit Union fell victim to shimmers, it now employs advanced technology to identify unusual transactions, blocking compromised accounts and collaborating with ATM manufacturers to prevent further fraud.

So, how can you protect yourself? Here are a few simple steps:

1. **Monitor Your Card Activity:** Keep a close eye on your debit or credit card transactions.
2. **Set Up Mobile Alerts:** Enable notifications on your phone to receive real-time updates on account activity.
3. **Use Contactless Payments:** When possible, opt for tapping your card instead of inserting or swiping it in the machine.

**BOB Comment:** Deb uses her iPhone to tap and pay whenever possible. However, she recently read an [article](#) about crooks stealing from Apple Pay payments through the air! What will they think of next?

### Quote of the Month:

“Coincidence is God’s way of remaining anonymous.”

—Goethe



## I Am Thankful [\*Source\*](#)

- For the wife/husband who says it's hot dogs for dinner tonight because she/he is home with me, not with someone else.
- For the teenager who is complaining about doing dishes because that means he/she is at home and not on the streets.
- For the taxes that I pay because it means that I am employed.
- For the mess to clean after a party because it means that I have been surrounded by friends.
- For the clothes that fit a little too snug because it means I have enough to eat.
- For my shadow that watches me work because it means I am out in the sunshine.
- For a lawn that needs mowing, windows that need cleaning, and gutters that need fixing, because it means I have a home.
- For all the complaining I hear about the government because it means that we have freedom of speech.
- For the parking spot I find at the far end of the parking lot because it means I am capable of walking, and I have been blessed with transportation.
- For my huge heating bill because it means I am warm.
- For the lady behind me in church that sings off key because it means that I can hear.
- For the pile of laundry and ironing, because it means I have clothes to wear.
- For weariness and aching muscles at the end of the day because it means I have been capable of working hard.
- And finally... for the alarm that goes off in the early morning hours because it means that I am alive.

Low PSAs to all,

Bob Marckini and Deb Hickey



*NO MEDICAL ADVICE: Material appearing here represents opinions offered by non-medically trained laypersons. Comments shown here should NEVER be interpreted as specific medical advice and must be used only as background information when consulting with a qualified medical professional.*