BOB tales

Brotherhood of the Balloon Member Newsletter | **May 2025**

"The best way to predict the future is to create it." –Abraham Lincoln

Dear Members (a note from Deb Hickey):

Spring has officially sprung! If you recall, my father and I live just outside of Boston, and in true New England fashion we've had sunshine, 50 mph winds, downpours, and a few rogue snowflakes—sometimes all in the same day. But there's something about this season that feels like a reset button. So it's the perfect time to talk about what's getting a major refresh in the world of prostate cancer: *screening and early detection.*

There's a wave of innovation happening in this space, and it couldn't come at a more important time. Multiple new studies and trials are shaking up the status quo and offering real hope for earlier, more accurate, and more personalized approaches to diagnosis.

One of the most exciting areas is genetics-based screening. From at-home saliva tests that outperform PSA, to polygenic risk scores that catch aggressive cancers PSA and MRI might miss, the shift toward precision screening is gaining serious momentum. Even the VA is launching a clinical trial to identify high-risk men using DNA and family history.

We're also learning about new tools that can detect cancers missed by MRI scans, giving doctors a much-needed second method for spotting hard-to-find disease.

Together, these advances point to a future where screening isn't one-size-fits-all. Instead, it's tailored to each man's unique risk profile, which could lead to earlier diagnoses, fewer missed cancers, and ultimately, better outcomes.

Also in this month's issue, we share the story of a veteran and longtime BOB member who's become a strong advocate for prostate cancer awareness and fair access to care through the VA. His passion recently caught the attention of a local TV news station.

In our Health section, we highlight new research on an experimental anti-aging drug that may extend life by up to 30%, a study suggesting that when you eat could impact heart health more than when you sleep, and we also cover five common mistakes people make when checking their blood pressure at home—an important read as more older adults rely on home monitors.

And finally, in the Book section, we share a moving story about a father-daughter team using Bob's book—and a few meaningful and well-placed Post-its—to educate others not only about proton therapy, but about the importance of becoming your own best health advocate.

As always, we welcome any suggestions you have for making the *BOB Tales* more valuable to members. Please send your feedback to DHickey@protonbob.com.

Deb Hickey

news report

At-Home Saliva Test Outperforms PSA and Flags Aggressive Cancers

Earlier this year, we shared exciting news about PRODICT™, a new at-home saliva test that analyzes DNA to assess a man's risk of developing prostate cancer. At that time, early studies showed the test could outperform the traditional PSA blood test—particularly in identifying men at higher risk of developing the disease. Now, new findings published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* further strengthen the case for this test as a potential game-changer in early detection.

In the latest study, researchers used the spit test to assess over 6,000 men between the ages of 55 and 69. The results were striking: of those flagged as high-risk by the saliva test, 40% were diagnosed with prostate cancer after biopsy—significantly higher than the 25% diagnostic rate typically associated with high PSA scores. Even more notable, the saliva test identified a larger share of aggressive cancers, which are the most dangerous and require prompt treatment.

The test examines over 130 genetic markers linked to prostate cancer, allowing it to offer a more personalized, precise screening experience. And because it's non-invasive and can be done at home, it has the potential to dramatically increase participation in early screening efforts.

While further research is underway to evaluate the test across more diverse populations and compare it to other diagnostic tools like MRI, this saliva-based approach is showing real promise. It may offer a more accurate, less invasive alternative to the PSA blood test—and bring us closer to a future where earlier detection leads to better outcomes for all men.

news briefs

Killer Vitamin? The New Weapon Against Prostate Cancer

Lloyd Trotman, Ph.D., and his team have discovered that a synthetic form of vitamin K—called vitamin K3—may significantly slow prostate cancer in mice. Unlike earlier trials with vitamin E, which increased cancer risk, this pro-oxidant triggered a new way for cancer cells to die by disrupting how cells process nutrients, causing them to burst. While promising, vitamin K3 hasn't been tested in humans yet and can affect blood clotting. More research is underway.

The Role of IROs in Insurance Appeals

A study shows that Independent Review Organizations (IROs) successfully overturned 42% of proton therapy insurance denials. Approval rates were highest for sarcoma and lowest for prostate cancer. Using strategies like citing guidelines and personalized letters improved chances, offering a key option for patients, especially those with prostate cancer, facing denials.

Genetic Test Catches Aggressive Prostate Cancers That PSA and MRI Miss

A new study, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine,* suggests that a polygenic risk score (PRS)—a test that evaluates inherited genetic variants associated with prostate cancer—could help detect aggressive cancers earlier, particularly in men who might otherwise go unscreened. The study found that more than 70% of clinically significant cancers identified using PRS would have been missed with only PSA or MRI testing. In fact, over 40% of high-risk cancers would not have been detected with current screening methods.

This research focuses on initial screening, especially among healthy men without symptoms, and adds to the growing body of evidence on the value of polygenic risk scores in prostate cancer care. In February, we reported on another study suggesting that PRS could also predict cancer progression in men already diagnosed with low-risk disease who are choosing active surveillance. In that research, men with higher PRS were significantly more likely to experience cancer upgrading over time.

Together, these findings emphasize PRS's potential to become a powerful tool in personalized prostate cancer care—from helping identify men who should undergo early screening to tailoring follow-up for those already diagnosed.

New Discovery Exposes Prostate Cancer's Hidden Origin

Scientists at Johns Hopkins have made a major breakthrough in understanding how prostate cancer begins. They discovered that a powerful gene called MYC may be the common trigger that turns healthy cells into cancer. In mouse models, activating MYC set off a chain reaction—boosting cancer cell growth, setting off immune system alarms, and then silencing those alarms to hide from the body's defenses. Eventually, the cancer cells even manipulated nearby cells to help them spread. This research reveals MYC as a key driver of prostate cancer and opens the door to potential treatments that could target and shut it down.

Upright Proton System Coming to Nebraska

Nebraska Medicine will soon offer proton therapy—the first of its kind in a six-state region, with construction starting on a $36 million project at the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center. The MEVION S250-FIT allows patients to be treated upright. This innovative system is expected to be operational by 2027.

PSMA Biopsy Detects Cancers Missed by MRI

In a groundbreaking presentation at the 2025 UCSF-UCLA PSMA Conference, Dr. Wayne Brisbane from UCLA highlighted the potential of PSMA-targeted biopsy as a crucial tool when MRI-guided biopsies fail to detect prostate cancer.

In his phase I trial, patients who had negative MRI-guided biopsies were later found to have clinically significant cancer using PSMA PET/CT scans. Notably, 41% of these patients had Grade Group 2 or greater cancers that were missed by MRI, with many of the new cancers located in areas the MRI had difficulty visualizing.

The study suggests using an SUV max threshold of 7 to improve detection rates, providing a valuable "second look" at prostate cancer that could significantly enhance diagnostic accuracy. This innovative approach could be key to ensuring no cancer is missed, offering a more personalized and precise method for prostate cancer diagnosis.

VA's Groundbreaking Trial Targets Precision Prostate Cancer Screening

A groundbreaking VA-led clinical trial called ProGRESS is putting precision screening for prostate cancer to the test. The study uses a new genetic risk model—based on family history and DNA—to identify men at higher risk, aiming to move beyond the one-size-fits-all approach.

Developed using data from nearly 600,000 Veterans in the VA's Million Veteran Program, the model has shown promising results across diverse populations. Now researchers are enrolling 5,000 veterans, ages 55 to 69, to see how well it works in real-world settings. Participants submit a saliva sample and are randomly assigned to standard or precision screening groups.

This targeted method could help reduce unnecessary biopsies, better monitor those at higher risk, and close health gaps—especially for black men, who face a significantly higher risk of prostate cancer.

flashback

We have been producing *BOB Tales* newsletters monthly for 24 years. During this time we've published thousands of articles that our new members have not seen, and some older members may enjoy revisiting. So, we regularly spotlight articles from the past that we believe remain relevant. This one from December 2007 was written by Bob Marckini and it's titled:

Honoring a Hero: Dr. James Slater and the Proton Center That Changed My Life

As I prepare to travel to California for the Naming Celebration of the Loma Linda Proton Treatment Center—now officially named in honor of its visionary founder, Dr. James Slater—I'm filled with deep gratitude and reflection. The celebration takes place in the afternoon on December 9, and I am honored to have been invited, along with a few fellow former patients, to share what this remarkable place and extraordinary man have meant to us.

Here's my story…

Seven years ago, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Like so many others facing that moment, I was terrified. Would I suffer the same painful journey as my brother, who underwent grueling surgery? Would I live to walk my daughter, Deb, down the aisle? Would I be able to hold on to the things that make life joyful—my health, my vitality, my dignity? Could I grow old with the love of my life and watch our two daughters and grandchildren thrive?

Because of Dr. Slater, the answer to each of those questions was a resounding *yes.*

Long before I arrived at the proton center, Dr. Slater had a dream—to develop a non-invasive, precision-targeted cancer treatment that could eradicate tumors while sparing healthy tissue. It was an audacious vision that many dismissed as impossible. But he built a team, overcame enormous institutional resistance, secured funding, pioneered groundbreaking technology, and took extraordinary personal and professional risks.

Because of his courage and relentless pursuit of that dream, I received proton therapy, a treatment that was not only painless and effective—it was profoundly life-affirming.

My wife and I often look back on those two months in Loma Linda as one of the best times of our lives. The care was exceptional, the emotional and spiritual support was uplifting, and the sense of community was unlike anything we had ever experienced. I left not just healed, but renewed—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Seven years later, I remain cancer-free and am living a life more fulfilling than I ever imagined.

Inspired by that experience, I founded the Brotherhood of the Balloon—a global support and advocacy network for men facing prostate cancer. Today, it spans 21 countries and includes more than 3,200 members. Together, we help others navigate their cancer journeys and raise awareness about the power of proton therapy. I also wrote a book to share my story, a story that continues to offer hope and healing to people around the world.

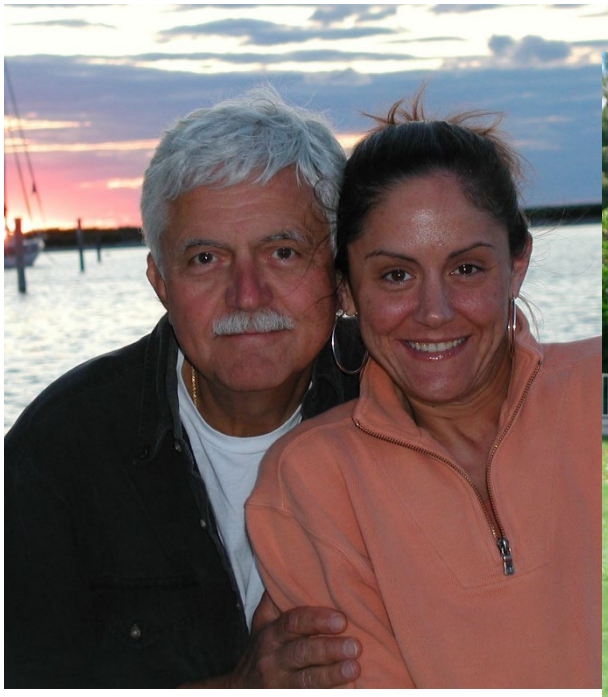
All of it—my healing, this vibrant community, and the countless lives touched across the globe—can be traced back to one man's unwavering vision and determination.

Dr. James Slater is more than a pioneer in medicine. He is my hero.

Following are a few photos that I brought with me to Loma Linda to illustrate some of the things I've been able to do as a result of Dr. Slater's extraordinary work…

2003: Celebrating my 60th birthday with two of my favorite things: my wife and a homemade chocolate cake with chocolate frosting…

2000: Walking my younger daughter down the aisle at her wedding…



2006: Spending time with my older daughter on our boat…

2004: One of my favorite pastimes…

2007: Sunset sleigh ride with my wife in Northern Vermont (2007)

► **BOB Comment:** This story was written in 2007. Today, we have more than 10,000 members across all 50 states and in 39 countries, representing virtually every proton center in the U.S., as well as many in Europe and Asia. And since then, Bob has gone on to experience *countless* more special moments—living proof of what's possible thanks to proton therapy and the pioneering vision of Dr. James Slater.

Veteran and BOB Member Fights For Prostate Cancer Awareness and Fair VA Care

Army veteran Robb Woodworth has fought many battles in his life. A Vietnam War veteran and long-time patient of the VA Health System, his most recent fight has taken him off the battlefield and into the national spotlight. In a powerful segment aired on KING5 News in Seattle, Woodworth shared his deeply personal experience with prostate cancer and called for systemic changes in how the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs approaches early detection, diagnosis, and treatment—particularly when it comes to proton therapy.

For years, Woodworth attended regular appointments through the VA in Seattle. Since 1999, not once did a doctor mention prostate cancer or recommend a PSA blood test. Between 2013 and 2021, he received neither a PSA test nor a digital rectal exam—the most basic tools for early detection. In March 2021, his cancer was finally discovered. It was advanced, aggressive, and linked to Agent Orange exposure.

"My PSA was 24.1—it was very scary," Woodworth said. "My primary care physician is wonderful. But until I brought it up, she never said anything about a PSA blood test."

His story illustrates a troubling reality. While one in eight men in the general population will be diagnosed with prostate cancer, the risk is nearly double for veterans. Yet the VA continues to follow outdated screening guidelines based on the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF), which in 2013 advised against routine PSA screening. The VA scaled back its efforts accordingly—leaving many veterans, like Woodworth, in the dark.

"Doctors overreacted," he said. "Which is potentially dangerous."

In 2018, the USPSTF updated its recommendation to support shared decision-making between men ages 55–69 and their doctors. But for many, including Robb, that change came too late. Between 2013 and 2021, an estimated 455,000 men died of prostate cancer.

Woodworth's challenges didn't end at diagnosis. When he inquired about proton therapy, the VA pushed back. "They came up with several reasons why I couldn't have it," he said. "None of them were true."

He has since compiled a list of proton centers that accept VA referrals—just not the one in Washington State. "The fight for equality in services for all veterans at all the VA hospitals goes on," he said.

Thankfully, Robb's cancer has not metastasized. He's undergoing treatment and remains committed to advocacy. His mission: to raise awareness, push for better screening policies, and ensure equal access to lifesaving therapies for all veterans.

"I'm not doing this for me anymore," he said. "I'm doing this for the next guy. No one should have to fight this hard just to be seen, heard, or treated."

making a difference by giving back

A Heartfelt Thank You

As we've mentioned before, we receive a monthly summary listing members who have made contributions to Loma Linda University Health (LLUH) through the *Robert Marckini Chair for Proton Therapy Research,* as well as other initiatives like the *Stronger Together* campaign, a bold $300 million effort to advance cancer research and care.

While we may not know the exact donation amounts, we make every effort to personally thank each donor with a phone call because Bob and Deb feel deeply honored by their support. Every contribution feels like a heartfelt "thank you" from our group. It's our way of expressing gratitude to the medical institution that pioneered proton therapy in a hospital setting and is investing in groundbreaking fields like theranostics, CAR T-cell therapy, boron neutron capture therapy, and FLASH proton therapy to treat more aggressive and complex cancers.

We are deeply grateful for all gifts. Thanks to you, life-saving proton therapy research continues to help those battling cancers of the prostate, breast, lung, pancreas, brain, skull, spinal cord, eyes, head and neck, and central nervous system. Thanks to you, Loma Linda

University Cancer Center (LLUCC) can treat a range of pediatric conditions, including severe, life-threatening cancers, while minimizing the damaging effects of radiation on children. Thanks to you, LLUCC is advancing treatment options for cancers that were once considered untreatable. Thanks to you, LLUCC continues vital research into other diseases as well.

Your gifts also fund clinical research, which is the foundation of successful patient treatments. This important work wouldn't be possible without the generosity of people like you. *Thank you.*

Giving Options

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

health

Anti-Aging Breakthrough Could Extend Life by 30%

An Israeli biotech company, Sirtlab, is nearing human trials for a revolutionary drug that may extend human lifespan by up to 30% by activating a protein called SIRT-6, linked to youth, vitality, and disease resistance. The treatment, which could be available in about three years, has shown promising results in animal studies, restoring SIRT-6 levels to youthful levels and dramatically improving lifespan and quality of life.

Professor Haim Cohen, Sirtlab's chief scientist, explained that boosting SIRT-6 in older animals led to sharper memory, better organ function, increased energy, and even renewed hair growth. This suggests that aging itself—not just diseases—can be slowed or partially reversed.

While some experts remain cautious, Sirtlab has secured millions in funding and is accelerating its timeline using Israeli investment platform PipelBiz. CEO Boaz Misholi emphasized that safety testing is ongoing and he believes the company's research will have a major global impact. Dr. Hagit Ashush, Sirtlab's VP of R&D, highlighted that the ultimate goal is to slow biological aging and delay chronic diseases, enhancing both lifespan and quality of life.

The anti-aging market is expected to surpass $120 billion globally by 2030, with Israel and the U.S. leading the way in biotech innovation. Given that over 56 million Americans are over 65 and healthcare systems are strained by age-related conditions, this treatment could provide significant medical and economic benefits. Strong U.S.–Israel scientific partnerships in AI, cybersecurity, and medical research suggest that Sirtlab's work could quickly attract interest from American investors, regulators, and pharmaceutical firms, potentially fast-tracking approval through the FDA.

► BOB Comment: "Having just celebrated my 82nd birthday, this is very good news indeed!" —Bob Marckini

When You Eat Is More Important Than When You Sleep

A new study from Mass General Brigham suggests that when you eat may have a bigger impact on heart health than when you sleep. Researchers found that eating only during daytime hours significantly reduced cardiovascular risk factors like high blood pressure and elevated clotting protein levels.

In a tightly controlled lab study, 20 healthy adults were split into two groups: one ate during both day and night (to mimic shift workers),

and the other ate only during the day. Sleep schedules were identical, and all participants were kept in isolation from time cues.

Only the group that ate around the clock showed signs of increased stress, reduced heart rate variability (HRV), and higher levels of a clotting protein (PAI-1). The daytime-only group saw no such issues and even experienced a 6–8% drop in blood pressure.

Researchers say these results show that aligning meals with the body's natural rhythms—especially avoiding nighttime eating—could be a powerful way to protect heart health, particularly for night shift workers and people with disrupted sleep patterns.

Avoid These 5 Mistakes When Taking Your Blood Pressure

Recent studies show that home blood pressure monitoring is becoming increasingly popular among older adults, particularly those at higher risk for heart-related conditions. In fact, 74% of older adults with blood pressure concerns own a blood pressure monitor. However, while many people own monitors, consistent and accurate usage remains a challenge. Small mistakes during routine checks can lead to misdiagnosis and unnecessary treatments. Here are five key things to keep in mind:

1. **Arm Position:** Keep your arm supported at heart level. Resting it on your lap or letting it hang unsupported can lead to inflated readings.
2. **Cuff Size:** Ensure the cuff fits correctly. A cuff that's too small can overestimate blood pressure, while one that's too large can underestimate it.

3. **Crossing Your Legs:** Crossing your legs during a blood pressure check can artificially raise your reading, so keep your feet flat on the floor.

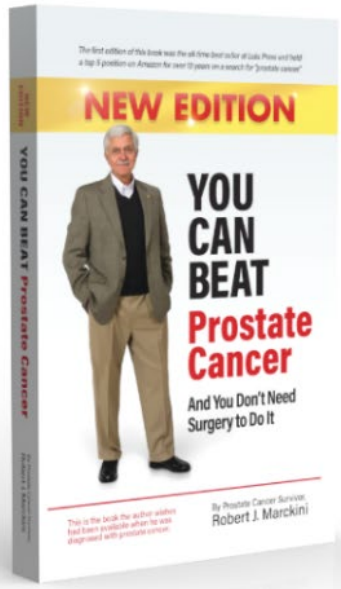
4. **Full Bladder:** A full bladder can raise blood pressure temporarily. Take a bathroom break before your check to avoid skewed results.

5. **White Coat Hypertension:** Anxiety at the doctor's office can spike your blood pressure. If this happens, allow time to relax and repeat the measurement.

Inaccurate readings can lead to overmedication and unnecessary stress, so always ensure proper technique. Consider home monitoring for more consistent results, especially with guidance from healthcare providers. Accurate blood pressure readings are crucial for effective treatment and a healthier heart.

the book

You Can Beat Prostate Cancer: And You Don't Need Surgery to Do It



Still an Amazon Top Seller!

Bob's second edition book continues to make a meaningful impact, as seen in the positive feedback on Amazon and the numerous messages we receive daily from readers.

On Amazon, the book is *still* holding steady in the No. 2 position on a list of more than 6,000 books on prostate cancer. And, the first and second editions have a combined 806 reader reviews, averaging an impressive five-star rating.

Did Bob's book help you? *Reviews matter.*

When someone receives a cancer diagnosis, one of the first things they do is search for answers. In fact, a study published in *The American Journal of Managed Care* found that 89% of individuals turn to the internet for information after a diagnosis—40% of them on the very same day. With Amazon listings frequently appearing at the top of search results—and with the site drawing over *3 billion visitors* each month—it's often one of the first places people land.

And reviews matter. Research shows that 91% of consumers read online reviews, and 84% trust them as much as personal recommendations—especially when navigating something as life-altering as cancer.

Taking just a few minutes to write a review of Bob's book could make a life-changing difference for someone facing difficult decisions. It could be the thing that guides them toward the treatment option that's right for them.

Your voice has power. Thank you for using it to help others.

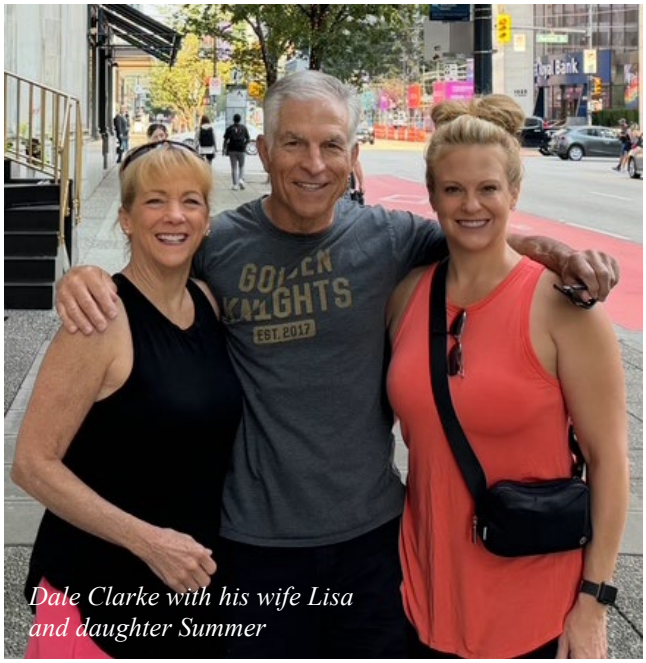
Sticky Notes and Second Chances: How the Book Sparked a Father-Daughter Mission

Dale Clarke, a new BOB member from Las Vegas, NV, recently completed his proton therapy treatment at Loma Linda University Cancer Center. Although his journey began with a frightening diagnosis, it was deeply shaped by knowledge, empowerment, and one powerful resource: *You Can Beat Prostate Cancer: And You Don't Need Surgery To Do It.*

For Dale, one message from the book stood above all others: "It's your body—so if you get a serious diagnosis, *you* do the research. *You* make the decision. Don't just blindly take someone else's advice—not even your doctor's," Dale said.

Armed with that mindset, Dale told his urologist he wanted proton therapy. "If you do that, I won't be your doctor anymore." Dale didn't flinch. "Bob Marckini's book gave me confidence," he said. "It took away all the unknowns—it covered everything that was going to happen, so there were no surprises."

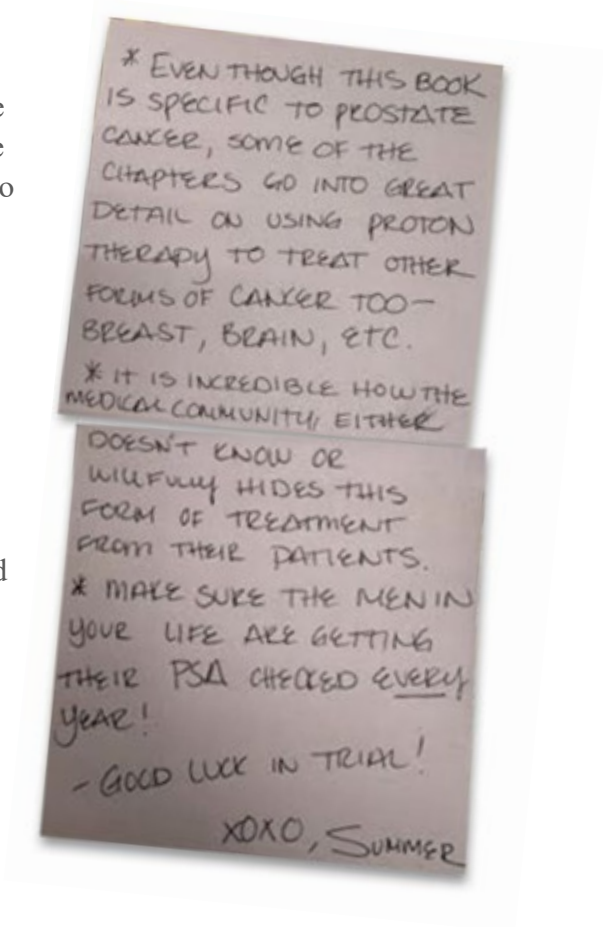
Since his proton treatment ended, Dale has become an advocate for awareness. “I can’t go anywhere without asking men if they’ve had their PSA checked,” he said. “The sad part is most of them don’t even know what PSA is. Are you kidding me?!”



Dale Clarke with his wife Lisa and daughter Summer

One of the most meaningful parts of Dale’s journey was the support of his daughter, Summer. A district attorney in Las Vegas, Summer wanted to understand every aspect of her dad’s diagnosis and treatment options. After reading the book herself—on the recommendation of her mom—she offered a powerful perspective: “I didn’t cry when Dad told me he had cancer,” she said. “I believe people go through things so they can help others. So, I told him, ‘God has a plan. Maybe you were diagnosed so we could spread the word and help others.’”

Summer started handing out copies of the book to friends, colleagues, and anyone connected to a new diagnosis. She sticks handwritten Post-it notes to the covers—each one a mini “elevator pitch” of why the book matters. “I give people the main points, yet also personalize each of my messages,” she said. “My notes are clear and compelling. I’m a trial attorney. I have someone’s attention for only so long before they tune me out.”



She even encouraged Dale to craft his own elevator pitch. Together, they share what they’ve learned with anyone who will listen.

Much like Bob did after his own diagnosis, Dale and Summer have turned a frightening chapter in their lives into a mission: to educate, encourage, and maybe even save lives.

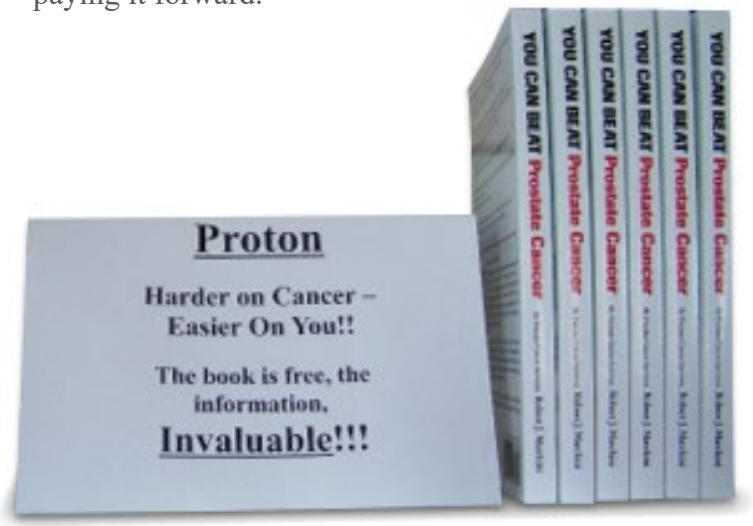
Last Month's Brain Teaser

What is seen in the middle of March and April that can't be seen at the beginning or end of either month?

Answer: The letter "R." One member answered, "the Easter Bunny," which made us smile.

Winner: Congratulations to Charles Reinhardt of Franklin, TN—the winner of our April 2025 Brain Teaser!

Charles received proton therapy treatment at the University of Florida Health Proton Therapy Institute in Jacksonville, FL, and had an outstanding experience with both the care he received and the outcome. Since completing his treatment in 2012, Charles has been a generous supporter of our organization and a passionate advocate for proton therapy—truly "paying it forward."



Not long after his treatment, Charles purchased multiple copies of Bob Marckini's book and proudly displayed them in his beach house on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Accompanying the books was a sign that read: *Proton—Harder on Cancer, Easier on You! The book is free; the information—invaluable!!!*

Charles also delivered a presentation to a local community group using the BOB PowerPoint slides. He adapted the content, made it his own, and even printed handouts for attendees to take home. His talk was so compelling and informative, audience members suggested he "take it on the road!"

Charles, your signed copy of Bob's book is in the mail. Thank you for your ongoing dedication, advocacy, and support!

New Brain Teaser

You're escaping a labyrinth, and there are three exits. Exit A leads to an inferno. Exit B leads to an assassin. Exit C leads to a lion that hasn't eaten in 3 years. Which exit do you pick?

Send your answer to DHickey@protonbob.com for a chance to win a signed copy of Bob Marckini's second edition book, *You Can Beat Prostate Cancer*.

Some Random Humor

Never leave home without a kiss, a hug, and an "I love you." Then remove the dog hair from your mouth as you walk to your car.

You know you're getting up there in years when you have to use a shopping cart at the pharmacy.

Don't worry about getting older. You're still going to do dumb stuff, only slower.

I lost my keys. I must have left them in the car. Frantically, I headed for the parking lot.

My husband has scolded me many times for leaving my keys in the car's ignition. He's afraid the car could be stolen. As I looked around the parking lot, I realized he was right. The car was gone!

I immediately called the police, gave them my plate number, and confessed that I'd left my keys in the car—and that it had been stolen. Then I made a very difficult call to my husband.

"I left my keys in the car and it's been stolen," I said.

There was a moment of silence. And then I heard, "Are you kidding me?" he barked. "I dropped you off!"

Now it was my turn to be silent. Embarrassed, I said, "Well, come and get me."

He retorted, "I will — just as soon as I convince this cop that I didn't steal your car!"

odds & ends

23andMe Bankruptcy Could Sell Off 15M DNA Profiles

On March 23, 2025, 23andMe filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in the U.S. This decision follows a period of declining demand for their ancestry testing kits and reputational challenges stemming from a 2023 data breach that affected approximately 7 million users.

As part of the bankruptcy proceedings, 23andMe has proposed a court-supervised auction of its assets, including the genetic data of over 15 million customers. This prospect has raised concerns about the privacy and security of personal genetic information, particularly regarding how new ownership might handle such sensitive data.

In response to these developments, consumer advocates and legal authorities are advising 23andMe users to consider deleting their accounts and associated genetic data. The California Attorney General, for instance, has issued a privacy consumer alert, emphasizing the importance of data protection during this uncertain period.

For those who have used 23andMe's services, it's prudent to review your account settings and consider taking steps to safeguard your genetic information. Be aware that, according to reports, 23andMe may retain user data for up to three years following a deletion request to comply with legal obligations.

Once a high-flying public company, 23andMe saw its stock (ticker: ME) plummet—from a peak of over $300 per share to just pennies in April 2025.

Did You Know…

- The longest English word is 189,819 letters long. It happens to be the chemical name for the protein titin. And, while this is "technically" the longest English word, yet not a traditional word, the longest word in most English dictionaries has 45 letters. It's the word for a lung disease which is contracted from the inhalation of very fine silica particles, usually from a volcano. The word is pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanokoniosis, or more commonly, "silicosis." The spell check on your computer will actually recognize this word!

- The world's longest concert lasted 453 hours.
- McDonald's once made bubblegum-flavored broccoli. Yum!
- The longest time someone has spent holding their breath underwater is 24 minutes and 37 seconds.
- The shortest war in history, the Anglo-Zanzibar war, lasted 38 minutes.

Quote of the Month

"My doctor told me to stop having intimate dinners for four. Unless there are three other people." – Orson Welles

final thought

The Seven Wonders?

A group of students was asked to list what they thought were the present-day Seven Wonders of the World. Though there was some disagreement, the following got the most votes:

1. Egypt's Great Pyramids
2. Taj Mahal
3. Grand Canyon
4. Panama Canal
5. Empire State Building
6. St. Peter's Basilica
7. China's Great Wall

While gathering the votes, the teacher noted that one very quiet and contemplative student hadn't turned in her paper. So she asked the girl if she was having trouble with her list. The girl replied, "Yes, a little. I couldn't quite make up my mind because there are so many."

The teacher said, "Well, tell us what you have, and maybe we can help. "The girl hesitated, then read, "I think the Seven Wonders of the World are:

to touch to feel to see
to taste to laugh to hear …and to love

The room was so full of silence you could have heard a pin drop. Those things we overlook as simple and "ordinary" are truly wondrous. We all need a gentle daily reminder that the most precious things are in front of you─your family, your faith, your love, your good health and your friends.

Low PSAs to all,

Bob Marckini and Deb Hickey