

Self-Proclaimed “Sports Nut” Turns to Proton Therapy for Prostate Cancer Treatment

“I feel like Fred Hutchinson helped save my life,” noted Wayne Lundberg about the famed baseball player and cancer center namesake.

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In August 2022, Wayne Lundberg, a 79-year-old Navy veteran and retired vice president of corporate taxation, had some routine lab work as part of his annual physical.

Although he was over the recommended screening age, his doctor ordered a PSA (prostate-specific antigen) test, which indicated his levels were elevated at 10.6. A PSA score greater than 4.0 is considered abnormal for men in his age group. Lundberg’s biopsies confirmed localized cancer.

“I was very concerned about it but didn’t panic,” he said. “I knew I had options to consider.”

Although his urologist wanted to perform a prostatectomy (the surgical removal of the prostate), Lundberg wanted to understand all treatment options. He had a friend who went with radioactive seeds (brachytherapy) so he was leaning towards that. But then he saw an ad featuring the Mariners’ head athletic trainer, Rick Griffin, talking about his proton therapy treatment for prostate cancer at Fred Hutch.

As a huge sports nut, he was drawn to learn more about proton therapy. But Lundberg also has a personal connection to the famous baseball player and manager.

As a 12-year-old Little League player, he got to meet Fred Hutchinson, the man for whom the cancer center was named. In 1955, he and his family took a trip to San Diego to see the Seattle Rainiers play against the Padres. While there, his mother made arrangements for Lundberg to meet some of the Rainiers’ players.

Hutchinson was the manager of the team and led them to win the Pacific Coast Championship that year. He also made sure Lundberg and his family were warmly received.

“He brought us to the locker room to meet the players, grabbed a practice ball, signed it and handed it off to the team to sign,” Lundberg said. “I ended up with 10 or 12 signatures. It was an

absolutely wonderful experience for a young sports nut.”

The signatures have faded over the intervening 70 years, but the ball itself serves as a memento to one of his best childhood memories.

“I feel like Fred Hutchinson helped save my life,” said Lundberg.

Lundberg researched both Fred Hutch and proton therapy and after discussing pros and cons with his wife, Diane, made proton therapy his number one therapy choice. He went to see [Emily Weg, MD](#), a prostate cancer specialist at the Fred Hutch proton therapy facility in Northgate.

“Dr. Weg was just so good about explaining everything and her optimism was infectious,” Lundberg said. “I never got the feeling of a crisis at all. In fact, I can’t speak highly enough of the way the place is operated, and the people! The comfort and ease that they try to instill – I took confidence from their caring attitude and competence.”

Before treatment, he also spoke with a past Fred Hutch prostate cancer patient to better understand his experience. Once he finished his treatment, he also “paid it forward” by sharing his experience with a prospective patient interested in learning more about proton therapy.

The proton therapy facility staff connects prospective patients with past patients upon request.

Lundberg said he experienced minor side effects such as fatigue and discomfort urinating, but these resolved once his treatment was over.

“The hardest thing about proton therapy was the drive to the facility,” he said. “I was lucky that my daughter and son-in-law drove me to treatment every day from Gig Harbor. They came in and literally took over. I had to do nothing but show up. I was remarkably happy with treatment and the results confirmed that.”

Lundberg has had three follow-up tests of his PSA since finishing proton therapy in February 2023. Waiting for the results of that first test was the most worrisome moment for him, he said. PSA levels can fluctuate after treatment for about 12 to 18 months. But he got a result of 0.6 and “whooped and hollered with joy,” he said.

The number has stayed the same during subsequent follow-ups.

“I would recommend that everyone investigate all treatment options available to them, especially proton therapy,” Lundberg said. “There are many different options, and everyone has to make their own decision on what they think will work best for them. I considered all the other options, especially seeds, but when I started to look at proton therapy, I knew it was the right treatment for me. And it turned out to be a process I was happy with, amplified by ease and the people. I never felt like it was an urgent or stressful treatment process.”

Lundberg continues to watch sports, especially his granddaughter, a high school freshman who

plays varsity basketball. He and wife Diane also spend time with their “queen,” Lucy, a 15-year-old Lhasa Apso.

Still paying it forward, Lundberg said he’s happy to speak to others who would like to hear about his experience. Please ask our concierge team to put you in contact with him.

concierge.proton@fredhutch.org.

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