Recovering From Cancer Surgery and The Beach Boys' 'Vegetables'

February 12, 2018 By Robin McGee

I have been home after surgery for two weeks. Recovery is slow but steady. Today I hope to have the last of my staples out. Still have the catheter—no date yet for removal of it. Apparently some patients can have them a month or more. I have a sporty-sized one that attaches to my leg to allow me to get around, and a huge one for bedtime. The bedtime one is great to prevent that middle-aged-lady-getting-up-at-nighttime-to-pee thing, so I tend to get a really good night's sleep at least.

While I recover, I am working through the finishing touches of the audiobook of The Cancer Olympics. I gave a copy of the book to my VON nurse and she texted me this morning to say that she is shocked and hooked after Chapter One.

For two more weeks, I must eat a low-fibre, low-residue diet to allow my intestines to heal. This is sometimes called a "white diet"—white rice, white meat, white bread, white potatoes. No raw fruits or vegetables. Afterwards I can branch out and start normalizing food intake. My appetite is getting better, such a blessing after months of barely being able to face food.

No word yet on future chemotherapy. I expect I will learn more in about four weeks. By report, my oncologist favours doing no chemo at all under circumstances like mine. He would recommend treating the next recurrence when it becomes obvious. I myself want to do something, as survival is better with adjuvant chemo after a massive surgery like this. I wonder if I can do the relatively mild Xeloda therapy I did last time. After all, although it was an undertreatment, it put me in remission for seven years. Or perhaps I could do a clinical trial. One thing seems certain: I cannot do FOLFOX anymore. The neuropathy in my hands, feet, and tailbone is simply too advanced.

A funny story: after I got my staples out, Andrew and I went to a Chinese food buffet. Guess what my fortune cookie said? "Enjoy your good health every day."

Today's song is on the subject of food. Now that my mouth sores have just about healed, I can taste things again. Although my vegetable range is limited by this "white" diet, I still pine for them. So this song is "Vegetables" by The Beach Boys, from their 1967 album Smiley Smile. Apparently, Brian Wilson was on a health craze at the time and wanted to promote veggie consumption. An interesting sidenote about this song: Paul McCartney came by the studio while it was being recorded, and he is the one making the sound of crunching celery in the background.

Foreshadowing of his future vegan lifestyle!

I’m gonna be round my vegetables
I’m gonna chow down my vegetables
I love you most of all
My favorite vege-table

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