



"The Gray Matter" is a monthly publication of WNC Brain Tumor Support.
828-691-2559---www.wncbraintumor.org---wncbts@bellsouth.net

February 2007

From the desk of George....

Many of you have already heard what I am about to say, but I don't believe that most of you have heard the real life changing experience which have prompted me to be such a strong advocate for brain tumor research and support. I think that the message is important enough to share this experience. This will be more of the like a "Readers Digest" version of that account.

Nearly 40 years ago I was diagnosed with a brain tumor. It was thought to be an astrocytoma although years later, pathology deemed it to be an oligodendroglioma. And then even later than that it was finally called an oligo-astrocytoma, a mixed glioma. Who cares anyway? None of them are any good!

Realize that this was in 1967. Computers were still in the early stages of development, CAT scans were not available yet and MRIs were only dreams and not a reality yet. Back then, you usually found out that you had a brain tumor after it was almost too late to treat, if there was any treatment that all. The most effective tool at that time was open surgery and whole brain radiation. When I started having symptoms like headaches, nausea and double vision, the doctors would just say that I was the nervous boy or "high strung" kid and that I would probably out to grow it. Thankfully, my parents would not accept that. That was probably the most, no, it was without a doubt the most crucial decision in their lives and mine as well! The second opinion doctor, Dr. Elwood found the brain tumor and resected it. It was the size of the orange. No wonder I had headaches!

While I was in the hospital, one of my best friends Steve and his mom stopped by the visit. Steve had a patch on his eye. He explained that he was having some problems with his vision and his doctor had placed a patch on his eye and hopes that it would strengthen the weak eye that had been causing his double vision. It was a nice visit. It was also the last time that I saw my friend, Steve alive. Like in way to many cases, Steve was misdiagnosed. The autopsy found that Steven had died from a brain tumor.

Soooo many things have changed since 1967. CAT scans, MRI, functional MRI scans, PET scans, Radiosurgery, Gamma Knife surgery and Cyberknife. Chemo agents like Schering's Temodar®, Pfizer's Camptosar®, Novartis' Gleevec®, Roche/Genentech's Avastin®, AstraZeneca's Iressa®, and Genentech's Tarceva®. Is there a cure yet? No. But we are getting closer. It is the hope that some agents above will slow or stop the progression of the tumors until there is a definite cure.

One of my friends, Dave Abbey, radio announcer at WWNC in Asheville, North Carolina is going through chemo right now. Dave was diagnosed with a brain tumor years ago and has had two more recurrences for a grade III astrocytoma since. Camptosar® and the Avastin® appear to be slowing down the effects of the disease. Will it be the "magic bullet?" I pray that it be. Good friends are hard to come by, and I don't want to lose another one.

George Plym President, WNC BTS



George Plym is an 11-time brain tumor survivor. He is the founder and president of WNC Brain Tumor Support.



Dave and Lisa Abbey

First Annual Cure the Kids Radiothon Raises \$110,000

The first annual Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation radiothon was held at the Asheville Mall on January 26 and 27th of this year. Some of the WNC BTS members volunteered their time and worked to be a part of this tremendous event. There was music, games and prizes while the radio announcer's Chuck Marsh and Drew Montgomery kept us entertained live at the mall and on the air at KISS FM. It was a great event and we all look forward to helping again members next year!



The fun-filled and informative on-air radio promotion on Asheville's KISS Country 99.9 FM also brought thousands of radio listeners in touch with the lives and life experiences of families dealing with childhood brain tumors.

Both the parents and children in these families were featured on numerous radio interviews during the 30-hour event, which also featured brain tumor researchers, clinicians, Asheville Mayor Terry Bellamy, representatives of corporate sponsors for the event, volunteers and PBTf staff members led by Development Director Aggie Alexander. Radio listeners from western North Carolina made contributions along with donors from 10 states and Iraq who listened in via the internet.

As of Monday, Jan. 29, the total amount raised had topped \$110,277, and a new source of funding was launched to bring increased research and family support to the work of the Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation. The success of the radiothon, coupled with expectations for a record-setting year in 2007 in the Ride for Kids® events, ensures the PBTf will be able to continue to serve the patient community and advance its expansive pediatric brain tumor research program.

Career Planning for Young Survivors

As more children become long term survivors of childhood brain tumors, the need for employment outcome counseling was uncovered in a study published in the July 1, 2006 issue of Cancer the professional journal of the American Cancer Society. Researchers reviewed published studies of unemployment rates amongst childhood cancer survivors in the US and Europe. Twenty-four controlled studies were analyzed, with data showing that survivors in the US were less likely to be employed as adults than their European counterparts. The article provides interesting potential explanations for the differences, and suggestions for interventions.

Sleep Disorder Drug Improves Cognition and Fatigue

Researchers from the Johnson Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of California Los Angeles recently reported that a drug used to treat sleep disorders, modafinil (trade name Provigil), appears to improve cognitive function, mood and fatigue in people with brain tumors. Thirty patients with both malignant and benign brain tumors were treated for eight weeks, at which time the majority reported improvements in several cognitive functions, depression, and fatigue.

It's Not What Is In The Cup

A group of alumni, highly established in their careers, got together to visit their old university professor. Conversation soon turned into complaints about stress in work and life.

Offering his guests coffee, the professor went to the kitchen and returned with a large pot of coffee and an assortment of cups - porcelain, plastic, glass, crystal, some plain looking, some expensive, some exquisite - telling them to help themselves to the coffee.

When all the students had a cup of coffee in hand, the professor said:

"If you noticed, all the nice looking expensive cups were taken up, leaving behind the plain and cheap ones. While it is normal for you to want only the best for yourselves, that is the source of your problems

and stress.

Be assured that the cup itself adds no quality to the coffee. In most cases it is just more expensive and in some cases even hides what we drink. What all of you really wanted was coffee, not the cup, but you consciously went for the best cups... And then you began eyeing each other's cups.

Now consider this: Life is the coffee; the jobs, money, popularity, and position in society are the cups. They are just tools to hold and contain Life, and the type of cup we have does not define, nor change the quality of life we live. Sometimes, by concentrating only on the cup, we fail to enjoy the coffee God has provided us."

God brews the coffee, not the cups..... Enjoy your coffee!

"The happiest people don't have the best of everything. They just make the best of everything."

Live simply. Care deeply. Speak kindly. Find some quiet Time. Leave the rest to Him.

Submitted by Roz Rudy, member/Indiana

Events

Mark your calendars!
Visit our online calendar for more
info on events .



Upcoming Events

February 15, Thursday

Special WNC BTS membership meeting at Pizza Hut - west, 163 Smokey Park Hwy (next to Asiana). 6:30.

March 15, Thursday

WNC BTS membership meeting at West Presbyterian Church Hall, 690 Haywood Rd., Asheville (west). Refreshments served at 6:15, meeting starts at 6:30.

Inclement weather policy

The following procedure will be observed for inclement weather conditions for WNC BTS functions. We will go by A-B Tech. night class policy. Announcements concerning WNC BTS (AB Tech) will be made by 5:30pm on local radio and TV stations for night classes. A voice mail message will be recorded on the switchboard (828-254-1921) and posted on the ABTech website (www.abtech.edu).

Parking at Normal Meeting Place

The best place to park is in the Suntrust bank drive-thru parking directly along the drive of the adjoining the church. Do not park next to the night deposit box! If you park in the back lot of the church, for security reasons, the back door will be locked at 6:30. So, park on the side of the bank!

Murphy's Lesser Known Laws

- Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
- He who laughs last, thinks slowest.
- Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.
- Those who live by the sword get shot by those who don't.
- The 50-50-90 rule: Anytime you have a 50-50 chance of getting somethingright, there's a 90 percent probability you'll get it wrong.

**HAPPY
BIRTHDAY**

February Birthdays

Peggy Gilbert 1st
Dave Bottom 12th