



THE WAY I SEE IT *by Genevieve Schmitt*

Get The Conversation Started

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YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD THE SAYING "If you want to keep a secret, don't tell a woman." Oh, yes, women are very good at spreading the word, or sharing information, if you will. This is the reason Robert Hess recently contacted me.

This summer, Robert is going to ride his Dyna Low Rider from California to Washington, DC, and then back to California, a total of 7,667 miles over approximately 45 days. Robert wants me to share with you (and others I reach through my motojournalism megaphone) why he's undertaking this monumental journey and inviting others to join him. You see, Robert is a prostate cancer survivor, and he's incensed that 29,000 men die each year from a disease that's easily detected and treatable. He believes that if more women knew this, they would encourage the men in their lives to get tested for this cancer. Yes, another thing women get to nag their men about. But this is a good nag. Robert says, "I think the only way to reach men about prostate cancer is through women. One of the reasons we do very well with breast cancer in this country is that women want to talk about this. When it comes to prostate cancer, no guy wants to talk about his equipment." He's right, isn't he? Guys would rather talk about the equipment in the garage any day than get involved in a conversation about their personal equipment.

Each year, 200,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer, the most common form of cancer in men. Eight years ago, Robert, at age 57, was one of them. He underwent surgery to remove two tumors on his prostate and has been cancer free ever since. But Robert was not content to sit by and let other

men go through what he did when he knew that this cancer is easily detectable with current screening methods, including a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test and a digital rectal exam (DRE). So, he formed the Prostate Cancer Awareness Project, a nonprofit charitable organization that attempts to raise prostate cancer awareness to a level where no man will ever again get caught with a surprise metastatic prostate cancer diagnosis. "Once prostate cancer metastasizes past the prostate, there's no cure," Robert explains.

Up until this big motorcycle ride he's planning, Robert, a father of five and grandfather of eight, was raising awareness and funds through bicycle events in and around his home in Manhattan Beach, California. This amateur athlete even won the 2007 California 200-meter match sprint in his age bracket (60-65). His original plan for the cross-country ride was to travel by bicycle, but last fall he underwent knee surgery, so the plan changed. Being a motorcyclist, he decided to do the transcontinental ride on a motorized two-wheeler and invite others to join him along the way to start the conversation about prostate cancer. "If I could get rough-and-tough Harley riders talking about prostate cancer, well, then any guy should stand up and talk about prostate cancer and get the test." And part of getting men discussing it is to involve women. "I believe that women are the most effective channel for reaching guys. So, if I can get a

guy's wife or significant other to say 'Look honey, have you done your annual test?' I know I'm making progress." I asked Robert how early men should start getting tested. He said 35 is an ideal age to get a baseline PSA reading.

With an extensive background in business and management, Robert knows a thing or two about putting the wheels on a big project in motion. He's put together a web site about the ride at www.TourDeUSA.org. His planned route and other information are posted there. He's asking for a donation of just \$25 to join him anywhere along the way; if you cannot take the ride but would like to donate to the cause, you can also do that on his web site.

The ride starts in El Segundo, California, on July 30 and traces a northerly route across the country, hitting the Sturgis Rally in August. Money raised from the ride will go to organizations that provide free testing for those without medical insurance. Robert says, "My focus is on the early detection and early treatment piece." He knows that will save lives. He's also pushing for better tracking of prostate cancer data, as not all states report prostate cancer numbers. More information about his organization can be found at www.ProstateCancerAwarenessProject.org.

Robert's goal for the ride is 5,000 riders and 34 media events. I'm asking you to support Robert in his efforts so that the same inroads we've made in early detection of breast cancer for women can be made for men with prostate cancer.

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