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## Faith-filled man's life is back on track, after cancer momentarily derailed it

Douglas Allen of Pittsford had a near death experience at age 17 when his car did a tailspin on the New York State Thruway. Now nearly 40 years later, he has survived another close call with death.



# Faith-filled man's life is back on track, after cancer momentarily derailed it

By Karen Boughton Siegelman

**D**ouglas Allen had a near-death experience at age 17 when his car did a tailspin on the New York State Thruway. Now nearly 40 years later, he has survived another close call with death.

Allen, 57, of Pittsford, was diagnosed with prostate cancer about eight months ago. Ten months before this diagnosis, his doctor began expressing concern since the amount of prostate-specific antigens (PSA), a protein produced by cells of the prostate gland, had been increasing a little bit each time he visited his primary physician for a checkup. (The higher a man's PSA level, the more likely it is that cancer is present.)

"I kept living in denial," recalled Allen. "I was hoping for a miracle, and I thought I would be in the percentage of men whose biopsy shows that they are cancer free."

Allen admits that he was totally in the dark about prostate cancer.

"The only thing I knew about prostate cancer was that one of my favorite rock stars, Frank Zappa, died from it," Allen said.

In June 2010 Allen's PSA had reached 11, and although there is no specific normal or abnormal PSA level that indicates a need for a prostate biopsy, his doctor and wife urged him to make an appointment for a biopsy. After canceling the appointment a number of times he finally drove himself to the Urology Center of Rochester for the test.

Allen, who describes himself as a Messianic Jew, said his faith carried him through the biopsy.

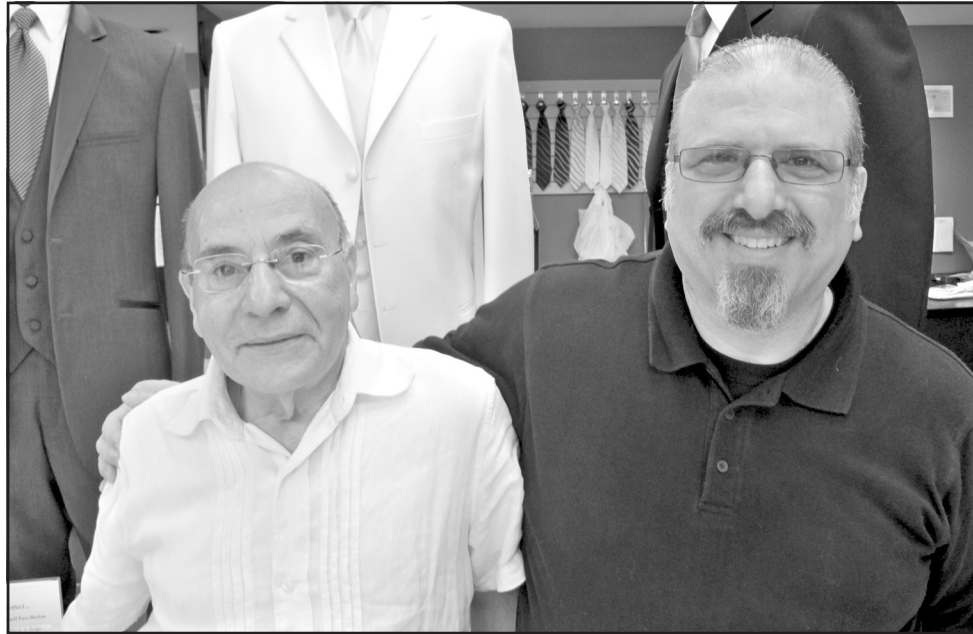
"As I drove to the test I listened to a Christian song called, 'I Surrender All', over and over again," said Allen. "I repeated the words of the song, telling God I was surrendering everything to him."

Allen added that during the biopsy he kept repeating Psalm 23 which states, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

Allen said he was confident that the biopsy would show no sign of cancer, but that would not be the case. In January of this year, his primary care physician informed him that the biopsy showed that he had prostate cancer.

"It was like I had been shot," said Allen. "I told myself life was done and that cancer was going to take me now."

However, 10 to 15 minutes later Al-



*Douglas Allen of Pittsford has become involved in a series of projects after a diagnosis of prostate cancer. One of his projects is a book he's writing. "I hope anyone who reads it will gain some insight that helps them through their own journey called life," he says. He is shown at Vittorio's Tuxedo Shop in Irondequoit, where he works. Vittorio Barbagallo, the shop's owner, is next to him.*

len said a sense of calm came over him. The doctor also told him that the cancer was not aggressive, which gave him some sense of relief. For the next few weeks Allen devoted himself to becoming educated about the treatment of prostate cancer.

"I have been an educated financial investor all of my life," commented Allen, who plans to retire at 60 with benefits from a nearly 20-year career in the Army and Army reserves. "I wanted to know about the bottom line of prostate cancer as well."

"I made a list of pros and cons and decided I didn't want removal of the prostate," Allen continued. "After much prayer and research, I decided to go with radiation because it is a precise way to kill cancer cells."

For six months Allen underwent radiation treatment. When he wasn't undergoing treatment, he was making some major changes in his life, including resigning from his job, changing his eating habits and starting an exercise regiment.

"I had been working as a debt collector," said Allen, "but read that a sedentary lifestyle can be detrimental to the prostate so I decided to leave that job. I recently returned to a former employer, Vittorio's Tuxedo Shop in

Irondequoit, where I work as a manager. However I am so grateful to my former employer because their health insurance plan took care of me through all of my radiation treatments."

Allen said he also realized that his love for fast food was working against his survival from cancer.

"I was eating fast food burgers six days a week over the past several years," said Allen. "I also used to eat very few antioxidants. Just prior to the biopsy I started eating dark chocolate, red peppers, broccoli, cauliflower and nuts. Now I even make my own trail mix, filled with antioxidants."

Allen added that his favorite Taco Bell restaurant on East Ridge Road in Irondequoit has pitched in to help him eat healthy. He notes that the restaurant staff makes him a special chicken, rice and tomatoes platter when he stops in for his daily meal.

Allen admits he has never been a fan of exercise either, but since being diagnosed with cancer he visits Planet Fitness in Irondequoit every day for 30 minutes. He reports he has lost 20 pounds and lowered his blood pressure, thanks to his daily cardio workout.

Besides these major lifestyle changes, Allen has also started writing a

book, something that had already been on his bucket list. However, the subject of the book has changed dramatically.

"I was going to write a book about financial strategy for retirement," said Allen, "but now my bottom line has changed. Instead of taking care of the bottom line on my investments, I'm taking care of the bottom line of my health. I want to leave something of lasting value behind that will benefit other people who are diagnosed with prostate cancer."

"My point with this book is that you don't have to have prostate cancer to benefit from reading it," Allen continued. "I hope anyone who reads it will gain some insight that helps them through their own journey called life. The book has a strong spiritual connection and is a story that will offer hope after the diagnosis."

Allen added that the title of the book, "This Can't Be the Right Train", is just a more creative way of saying, "I can't believe this happened to me."

Allen invests at least one day a week to handwriting his manuscript and then hands it off to his friend, Larry Demejo, who types it into the computer. He has had assistance from Peter Kostadinov at the Monroe County Library system regarding self publishing, and is working with an editor and illustrator as well.

His book is not the only venue Allen plans to use to tell his story of cancer survival and how important faith is. He also plans to start a support group for those who have or have had prostate cancer, called Bottom Line Watchers, and is developing a website for this group of men as well.

He explains he used to keep his eye on the bottom line of his financial investments, but now he hopes to spread the message to others that the "bottom line" of their health and faith in God should be the focus of their lives.

From the results of Allen's recent test, which indicated his PSA level is nearly cut in half, the radiation treatments, prayers and other actions he has taken over the past several months have made a difference.

"I want people to know that I was someone who thought it was never going to happen to me," said Allen, "but cancer made me realize how mortal I am."

"Especially with my book, I want to leave behind something of lasting value that will benefit other people," Allen added. "Sometimes prostate cancer is considered to be such a private subject, but I'm not afraid to take this discussion public and help people open up about it."

For more information on Allen's book, support group and website, email him at [dwa349@live.com](mailto:dwa349@live.com).