

Paddlin' with Thaxton

Cancer is a word, not a sentence

By Jim Thaxton

Growing up in the 1950s and '60s, if someone had cancer, it was kept secret. It was not the topic over the fence on washday. My first exposure to cancer began on a warm August day when our office manager at the canoe rental called to tell me her biopsy results. She had stage 3 breast cancer.

As her primary caregivers, my wife and I were there during her double mastectomy, eight months of intense chemotherapy, and everything that went with it. I became aware of cancer from diagnosis through treatment and the aftereffects, including "chemo brain."

To take her mind off the side effects of the chemo, I painted a 28-foot Voyager canoe pink. She filled the Pink Canoe and two other 32-foot canoes with breast and ovarian cancer survivors that she met during treatment.

All three canoes participated in Paddlefest on the Ohio River. The Pink Canoe became a traveling ambassador for breast cancer awareness.

In 2006, Northwest Rivers Supplies contacted me. They were concerned that so many of their paddlesports outfitter clients were being treated for various kinds of cancer. They offered to do a promotion for cancer awareness and share a portion of their profits to help fund it.

I repainted the Pink Canoe in a birchbark motif, blending in all 28 feet in different colors representing human cancer. It was not pretty.

Pendleton County's local Women's Cancer Awareness organization wanted the Pink Canoe back.

I was working as a health educator with our local health department and my team leader gave me a request for proposal from Lexington Komen for the Cure to develop a program to raise breast cancer awareness in rural counties.

I contacted "Doctor Google" and stumbled upon Dr. Don McKenzie's research on improving the quality of life of breast cancer survivors (BCS) through the sport of dragon boat racing.

He formed the first BCS team, Abreast in a Boat, in Vancouver, Canada. Based on Dr. McKenzie's work and my personal experience as a caregiver to a breast cancer survivor, in 2007 I wrote a grant to Komen to purchase a pink dragon boat and trailer. Komen awarded the grant in 2008.

I didn't know much about the sport. Then, by what I can only describe as divine intervention, I was introduced to Priscilla Elgersma, who recently moved to the tri-state from Vancouver with more than 15 years of dragon boat racing and coaching experience. The pink dragon boat arrived on Valentine's Day in 2009. Together, Priscilla Elgersma and I recruited a BCS team.

During one of our practice sessions in early summer of 2012, Lynn Clayton, a former police officer and EMT, expressed concern about a mole on my forehead.

She told me that one of her friends was diagnosed with malignant melanoma. The skin cancer had spread to his lymph nodes, and he



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was dead within two weeks of diagnosis. She urged me to see a dermatologist.

I took her advice. Sure enough, that mole was biopsied and determined to be melanoma. I got rid of the mole and a side benefit was a bit of a face lift from the surgery.

In 2016, I was making presentations in Northern Kentucky and across the tri-state addressing evidence-based harm reduction strategies to combat heroin overdoses and other diseases associated with sharing needles. My voice would often give out mid-presentation.

It was getting more difficult to project commands while steering the dragon boat at practice and especially during competitions.

My family doctor sent me to an ENT to scope my throat and larynx. The ENT ordered a biopsy. It was cancer.

He made an appointment for me to visit an oncologist who helped me select a treatment plan that required five weeks radiation with a 95% survival rate. The team at radiology tried to fit me with a mask that would be used to hold my head in place while my vocal cords and throat got zapped with radiation to remove the cancer.

I had no idea that there was any PTSD dormant in my psyche from my time in the Navy.

While going through Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) School with other Naval aviators, I was given the waterboard treatment among other sadistic procedures during the resistance phase. I could never understand why Congress felt waterboarding was considered torture since it was a routine part of training for those who were at risk of capture.

I was placed on an inclined board with my head at the lower end. My legs were strapped at the high end of the board and my arms were tied on each side.

I was asked a question. Apparently, I gave the wrong answer. A wet rag was placed over my face and then someone began dumping water onto the rag. It felt like I was drowning.

I managed to break my right hand free and grabbed the corpsman's bushy red beard who was holding the rag which simultaneously disappeared from my face. Four hands tried to pull my hand free but realized the beard was going to come with my hand.

Someone yelled "Academic situation." I was then informed that if this was a real POW situation that I would have probably been shot right there on the spot.

Now fast forward about 45 years and a couple of radiologists were talking calmly to me as I lay flat on a table. They placed a pliable white fabric over my face followed by a wet rag saturating the mask to conform to my face. I shoved

both healthcare workers away and sent the mask across the room like a Frisbee while simultaneously rising off the table like Lazarus from the grave.

So, there was some residual PTSD after all.

I apologized and managed to avoid destroying another mask. The radiation treatments began the following day.

I completely lost my voice after the second week. There are only four truly essential commands during dragon boat practice: hold, brace, forward and back. I used whistle commands to get the boat stopped, stable, move forward and back.

It worked. I was able to continue to steer at practice for the rest of the season and thankfully my voice returned just in time for our annual festival.

There was one more visit by "Old Man Cancer" in late summer of 2022. My PSA was steadily climbing so I was sent to see a urologist. Any sense of modesty I may have enjoyed through my life imploded the moment I dropped my pants.

The digital exam determined that my little prostate gland wasn't so little anymore. A biopsy confirmed cancer.

We discussed the options for treatment. Every prostate cancer is different. I was given three options: one, surgically remove the gland and all that the trimmings that go with it; two, a series of radiation treatments over a few weeks followed by wearing a catheter for two weeks; and three, a relatively new treatment called cyber knife consisting of five radiation treatments all done in a week (there was a wee bit more to it than that but all I heard was "done in a week.")

Prior to the radiation treatments, I had to have an MRI, get fitted for a saddle to hold me still during the treatments and make sure the radiation was hitting the prostate and nothing else in the vicinity, and two other minor surgical procedures.

Five small gold rods about an eighth of an inch long and as thin as the lead in a pencil would be implanted in my prostate to set the boundaries where the radiation would be aimed, and a gel of some kind would be placed internally between the prostate and my lower colon.

There was one more thing. I had to be given an enema prior to each procedure and each radiation treatment. My wife, a retired nurse, was delighted to be my tail gunner on these missions.

My two-year checkup is coming up March 24.

Most recently, on March 3, a VA ENT scoped my throat and found a mass. They did three biopsies on March 7 and the results came back on March 14. All three were malignant.

Since I've had radiation, there are only a few treatment options left. I meet with an oncologist who specializes in laser surgery on March 20.

As I have learned from so many of my Kentucky Thorough-Breasts teammates, cancer is more a chronic treatable disease thanks to the marvels of science than the death sentence it was not too long ago.

That's also why we Paddle for Cancer Awareness.

Kindergarten registration is taking place

FALMOUTH — All children who will be 5 years old by Aug. 1 are eligible for kindergarten for the 2025-26 school year.

Kindergarten registration for Southern and Northern elementary schools will be conducted through online registration. Parents may access the online forms at www.pendleton.kyschools.us under the "Parents" tab, (preschool/kindergarten enrollment). Registration will be available online through March 31. Paper copies of registration forms may also be obtained from the elementary schools or the Department of Student Services office.

Required documents for registration include birth certificate, proof of residence, current immunization certificate, school physical, eye exam and a dental screening. All required documents may be dropped off at the elementary schools or at the Department of Student Services office.

Parents requesting early entrance to kindergarten may pick up a petition packet at either elementary, Student Services or the Board of Education offices. Completed requests must be submitted to Board of Education office by April 14.

MASTER COMMISSIONER SALES

In Order to comply with the orders of the Pendleton Circuit Court, the Master Commissioner will sell the property described in the following action(s) on March 26th, 2025 at the hour of 9:30 a.m., at the Pendleton County Judicial Center, 120 Ridgeway Ave, Falmouth, Kentucky 41040. Said property shall be sold to raise the amounts hereinafter set forth, together with interest and the costs of the action, and upon the (unless otherwise indicated) following terms and conditions: 1) The purchaser shall be required to pay ten percent (10%) of the purchase price on the date of the sale, to apply on the purchase price; 2) The balance of the purchase price shall be due and payable, in cash or certified funds, within thirty (30) days from the date of sale; 3) The purchaser shall be required to execute a bond, with good and sufficient surety thereon for the unpaid balance of the purchase price, said bond to bear interest at the rate of 5.44% percent per annum from the date of sale, until paid in action 22-CI-00110 [PNC Bank, National Association v. Paul Neiheisel, et al.] and at the rate of 4% percent per annum from the date of sale, until paid in action 23-CI-00140 [CCIC, LLC v. Estate of Michael G. Russell, et al.] and at the rate of 6% in action 17-CI-00002 [Independent Capital Holdings, LLC v. Dennis Twisselmann, et al.] 4) Any Purchaser who is not paying the entire purchase price on the sale day must have his/her Surety on the Bond present at the sale and may not thereafter produce the Surety. If you cannot comply with this requirement, please do NOT bid. If prospective bidders do not fully understand this, they must consult with their attorney prior to the Sale to answer any questions. 5) The purchaser shall have the privilege of paying all or any part of the purchase price or paying said bond before maturity by paying the balance of the principal, together with all accrued interest thereon; 6) In PNC Bank, NA v. Paul Neiheisel, et al. the Real Estate is divisible by Lot Number. Lot 1 (Parcel No.: 016-00-00-019.04) will be sold separately and consecutively to Lot 9, Lot 10 and Lot 11 (Parcel No.: 016-00-00-019.05) of Hope Haven Division, for the purpose of satisfying the Judgment Liens herein adjudged against the Real Estate. Upon the sale of Parcel No. 016-00-00-019.04, in the event the proceeds are not sufficient to satisfy Plaintiff's Judgment and the costs in full, the lots in Parcel 05 will be sold sequentially by first selling Lot 10, and next selling Lot 9, and finally Lot 11, until adequate funds are raised to pay the Judgment and costs in full. 7.) The purchaser shall be required to assume and pay any and all ad valorem taxes on the subject property for the current year, and all subsequent taxes; 8) The subject property shall be sold free and clear of all liens and claims of any party to this action, except restrictions and easements thereon appearing of record in the Pendleton County Clerk's Office, if any; 9) Possession of the subject property shall be given to the purchaser upon confirmation of Commissioner's sale and payment of the purchase price, and the Defendants or any persons claiming through them shall have vacated the premises by that time; and 10) Said property shall be sold subject to: a) Assessments for public improvements levied against the subject property; b) Existing zoning ordinances, statutes, laws or regulations; c) Any facts which an accurate survey or inspection of the property may disclose; d) Right of Redemption, if any, of the Primary Defendant and of the United States of America pursuant to 28 USC §2410, where applicable; and e) The property is being sold "AS IS."

The Properties are as follows:

1. PNC Bank, National Association, Plaintiff v. Paul Neiheisel, Joan Hamblin and Washington Mutual Bank, FA, Defendants

PIDN # 016-00-00-019.04 and 016-00-00-019.05
Address: 47 Boxer Drive, Falmouth, KY 41040

Pendleton Circuit Court Case: 22-CI-110

Judgment: : \$28,223.79, together with interest at the rate of 5.44% from date of entry of Judgment, until paid, plus any continuing costs or attorney's fees; The property being sold is described in the Judgment; entered in Pendleton Circuit Court, Action No. 22-CI-00110 on September 26, 2024 and with a Property Identification Number of 016-00-00-019.04 and 016-00-00-019.05. Being the same property conveyed to Paul Neiheisel and Joan Hamblin who acquired title, with rights of survivorship, by virtue of a Deed from George E. Ent and Frances Gail Ent, husband and wife, dated February 2, 1998, recorded February 3, 1998 at Deed Book 206, Page 446 of the Pendleton County, Kentucky records and pursuant to Deed to Paul Neiheisel and Joan Hamblin who acquired title, with right of survivorship, from George E. Ent and Frances Gail Ent, husband and wife, dated June 2, 1999, recorded June 4, 1999, in Deed Book 220, Page 714 of the Pendleton County Court Clerk's Office.

All pursuant to Judgment Entered September 26, 2024 and Order of Sale Entered February 20, 2025.

Plaintiff's Attorney: Gail C. Hersh, Jr. or Nicholas M. Smith, Manley Deas Kochalski, LLC, PO Box 165028, Columbus, OH 43216. Phone: 614-220-5611.

2. CCIC, LLC, Plaintiff, v. Estate of Michael G. Russell, Commonwealth of Kentucky, County of Pendleton, Curtis Russell, Michelle Russell, Truist Financial Corporation, Linda Russell, Susan Russell and Unknown Tenant or Tenants, Defendants

PIDN # 042-70-20-012.00
Address: 10978 Hwy 10 N, Foster, KY 41043

Pendleton Circuit Court Case: 23-CI-00140

Judgment: The principal sum of \$84,966.74, together with interest at the rate of 4% on \$81,035.25 from on or after June 20, 2008, until paid, plus any continuing costs or attorney's fees; The property being sold is described in the Judgment; entered in Pendleton Circuit Court, Action No. 23-CI-00140 on February 20, 2025 and with a Property Identification Number of 068-00-00-012.00. This being part of the same property that was conveyed to Michael G. Russell and Susan Russell, husband and wife, by Deed dated April 30, 2024 and recorded May 4, 2004, of record in Deed Book 262, Page 318 in the office of the County Clerk of Pendleton County, Kentucky. Thereafter, being a part of the same property conveyed to Michael G. Russell, single, by Quitclaim Deed dated March 24, 2006 and recorded March 24, 2006 of record in Deed Book 277, Page 464 in the office aforesaid. Thereafter, Michael Gene Russell died intestate on 3/31/2022 and pursuant to Pendleton District Court Probate Case No. 22-P-00045, Curtis Russell having been appointed Administrator of the Estate.

All pursuant to Judgment and Order of Sale entered February 20, 2025.

Plaintiff's Attorney: Richard Boydston, Dentons Bingham Greenebaum LLP, 312 Walnut Street #2450, Cincinnati, OH 45202. Phone: 513-455-7663.

3. Independent Capital Holdings, LLC, Plaintiff, v. Dennis Twisselmann, Bertha Twisselmann, Commonwealth of Kentucky, County of Pendleton, Mid South Capital Partners, LP, Charter Group, LLC, Defendants

PIDN # 032-00-00-019.04
Address: 2222 Turner Ridge Road, Falmouth, KY 41040

Pendleton Circuit Court Case: 17-CI-00002

Judgment: : The principal sum of \$8,215.27, together with interest at the rate of 6%, until paid, plus any costs or attorney's fees; The property being sold is described in the Judgment; entered in Pendleton Circuit Court, Action No. 17-CI-00002 on February 14, 2025 and with a Property Identification Number of 032-00-00-019.04. This being the same property conveyed to Dennis Twisselmann and Bertha Twisselmann, from Gary L. Afterkirk and Brenda Afterkirk, by Deed dated October 27, 2005, recorded in Deed Book 274, Page 22 in the Pendleton County Clerk's Office.

All pursuant to Judgment and Order of Sale entered February 14, 2025.

Plaintiff's Attorney: Hunter Jones, PO Box 414, Lexington, KY 40588. Phone: (859) 403-3313.

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St. Francis Fish Fry days running through April 11

FALMOUTH — The St. Francis Xavier Parish Knights of Columbus Fish Fry is every Friday from March 7 to April 11 in the fellowship hall behind St. Francis Xavier Church at 202 W. Second St.

Adult dinners, including dessert, are single entrée for \$15 and combos for \$17.

Child meals for those 10 and younger are \$8. Beverages are sold separately.

Patrons can dine-in or carryout from 4 to 7:30 p.m. Or call ahead with a carryout order from 2 to 7 p.m. and it will be ready when you arrive. Call-ahead phone numbers are 859-453-7058 or 859-453-7059.