

***About Health TV with Jeanne Blake***  
**Colon Cancer: Mike's Story**  
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JEANNE BLAKE: Welcome to *About Health*. I'm Jeanne Blake. Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of death from cancer in both genders in the United States. And the risk of developing colorectal cancer increases after the age of 50. Mike Lane had no reason to suspect that he had colorectal cancer. He was 49 years old, superbly fit, riding 20 miles a day on his bicycle and the father of three daughters. Then, he learned he had cancer. Mike, thank you for coming in and joining us on *About Health*.

MIKE LANE: You're very welcome.

JEANNE BLAKE: Before you were told that you had cancer you were known in your hometown as "Mr. Health."

MIKE LANE: Yes, I was.

JEANNE BLAKE: How come?

MIKE LANE: I think just because of the image that I portrayed. The fact that I'm the Recreation Director for the Town of Marblehead. I'm always out and I'm always with children. I used to be a Phys. Ed. teacher in Marblehead as well. And that image is about health, and therefore a lot of the children called me "Mr. Health." Um, parents started to pick up on it, and so throughout town I became "Mr. Health."

JEANNE BLAKE: and you were riding your bike 20 miles a day. What was that, when did that start, by the way?

MIKE LANE: I bet that started probably about twelve years ago. I took up biking as a result of a few injuries that occurred while running so I had to take up something a little more passive for my back. I took up riding, and I just, I love it. I love riding and I love doing as many miles as I can. As you know, it's hard to do it around our area just because of the traffic, but um, you can head out and get going and, of course, once I was diagnosed with the cancer, Lance Armstrong became my role model as a rider so I kind of jumped on board and continued the image.

JEANNE BLAKE: So tell us about that awful day that you were told that you had cancer.

MIKE LANE: Well, it started when I went for a yearly physical. Just a normal, routine physical with my doctor. A yearly thing that I went through every year. Um, he suspected something during the exam.

JEANNE BLAKE: Because?

MIKE LANE: He suspected something because he found some tissue that perhaps was suspicious of something that wasn't right. If

JEANNE BLAKE: But it wasn't a colonoscopy?

MIKE LANE: No, it wasn't a colonoscopy. They were just checking, checking my prostate. And I went to um, further treatment after that, to be diagnosed. That was the colonoscopy. And, of course, that was a routine colonoscopy for me, um, everybody just said oh, you're gonna be fine, you're only 49 years old. I went and had a colonoscopy, even walking into the um, hospital to have the exam, a

number of my friends work there, and they looked at me and said what are you doing here? You're only 49 years old. And I said, oh, they just suspect something, you know.

JEANNE BLAKE: Right, and generally they say that colonoscopies should begin at 50.

MIKE LANE: Should begin at the age of 50. So I went in, very relaxed, not thinking anything was wrong at all, and when I woke up from the colonoscopy, they informed me that I had cancer.

JEANNE BLAKE: And were, were you alone at that time with the doctor?

MIKE LANE: I was alone, ah, with the doctor and the nurse. I suspected that something was up because when I woke up the nurse was rubbing my left hand and crying. Um, I didn't know her but we had become acquainted that day and um, she was, she was tearful and the doctor was there and who was a great guy too, you know, I'm very open and we got to talking and I got to know these people. Um, he informed me that I had cancer and I just about lost it really. I, I didn't really know what to do. As soon as you hear the word, you think okay, what do I have to do? What plans to I have to make?

JEANNE BLAKE: So you instantly went to, I'm going to die?

MIKE LANE: Yeah, I instantly went to I'm gonna die. Yep.

JEANNE BLAKE: And what did your doctor tell you about where you, could he tell you the stage that you were at? 1 being the least of, you know, the least worrisome and stage 4 being most worrisome.

MIKE LANE: Right. He, at that point during the colonoscopy, he said that he um, he immediately, when he saw my attitude kind of go down, he immediately said that um, I was going to be fine. They

were going to take care of me. They were going to start treatment as soon as they could. And that in five years, he said we would be sitting around laughing about that. And I told him then I said well I'm going to hold you to that. I said, so, let's get going, let's figure out what's gonna, gonna happen. He did not mention Stages or anything like that...He didn't go into it.

JEANNE BLAKE: But then you later learned that, that what? What Stage was it Mike.

MIKE LANE: It was Stage 3.

JEANNE BLAKE: Which is?

MIKE LANE: Pretty bad.

JEANNE BLAKE: Which means it had been there for a while.

MIKE LANE: Yep, it had been there for a while. It had metastasized to my liver, uh, we didn't know at the time, we didn't know that until surgery.

JEANNE BLAKE: Ah, huh.

MIKE LANE: But it had metastasized to my liver. It was VERY odd that I didn't have any symptoms.

JEANNE BLAKE: Yes, I mean that it, that is extremely unusual from everything that I've read.

MIKE LANE: yeah. There was no family history at the time. There were no symptoms and I can, I'm the type of person that masks symptoms. You know, like if something hurts, or whatever, I try to get

through it but I really didn't have a symptom that they would have looked at and said oooh, you need to have this checked out.

JEANNE BLAKE: So you say that at the time you had no family history of colorectal cancer. But during your treatment, your mom got sick?

MIKE LANE: During my treatment, during my um, second go around, my mom got diagnosed with colorectal cancer but it had spread all throughout her body. Um, and at the time, I was just getting ready to either go in for my second surgery or perhaps postpone it. If I could postpone it, here's what I wanted to do because I knew I was going to have to take care of my mom.

JEANNE BLAKE: Let's just back up a minute. So a year had passed, right? So let's just back up before we get to your second surgery and explain to folks um, you know, that, that you went through a PET scan that you, you had cancer, that there was something going on?

MIKE LANE: Right.

JEANNE BLAKE: Let's just talk first about what your treatment was like Mike. What, what was that like for you, um, in the weeks and months following your diagnosis. I mean you started out with a very grand attitude?

MIKE LANE: I wanted to get going, yeah, I wanted to get going right away. Um, I couldn't understand why I didn't walk out of my colonoscopy and start treatment. I just, you know, to me it's like okay you have this life-threatening disease, something needs to happen today to take away from life-threatening disease.

JEANNE BLAKE: Right.

MIKE LANE: Take it away from you, so

JEANNE BLAKE: The cells are splitting, let's stop it.

MIKE LANE: Right, right, what are we waiting for?

JEANNE BLAKE: How long did you wait?

MIKE LANE: I waited about for weeks for treatment starting. And of course that whole time, like you said, I'm thinking what's going on down there now? How, you know, where's it going, what's it doing? Luckily for me, I think I had an advantage, in that um, once they gave, outlined my treatment to me and told me who I was going to be seeing, I personally knew my doctors and nurses. I was very fortunate. The school at which I had been an athletic director at, I had these doctors and nurses children. So when I walked in the door of this facility to get treatment, I was walking into an atmosphere that I was already quite familiar with the people so I, I felt a little privileged. I didn't get extra treatment or special treatment, but knowing the players before you walk onto the field is a big advantage I think.

JEANNE BLAKE: Just makes, gives you a lot more confidence.

MIKE LANE: A lot more confidence.

JEANNE BLAKE: I mean that's why they say it's so important that doctors and patients be able to talk. You already had that built in, you didn't have to establish that rapport. But that rapport really can make a difference.

MIKE LANE: It was huge for me.

JEANNE BLAKE: At what point did you go from feeling grim, that I have to get ready to die, to I'm gonna beat this?

MIKE LANE: Almost, I would say, probably within

JEANNE BLAKE: Ten minutes?

MIKE LANE: Yeah, it was very quick. Because as soon as they told me, what ah, what the plan was, when my doctor told me that we were gonna you know beat this, I was gonna be fine and we'd be laughing about it in five years, it gave me the, the strength to say okay, let's go, what do I have to do. And then, of course, when he told me who I was gonna see, and who the treatment was gonna be with

JEANNE BLAKE: Right.

MIKE LANE: I said, Let's go.

JEANNE BLAKE: Um, what did you, I mean, you had chemotherapy and radiation?

MIKE LANE: I had radiation first, I had radiation prior to surgery. Um, I did the radiation for four months and that was to shrink the tumor so that when they operate they don't have to take out as much.

JEANNE BLAKE: Um, hm...

MIKE LANE: It virtually disintegrated the tumor, when they, you know, we got to a point because they image you as you are going along through radiation and they, they saw it shrinking, and shrinking and

shrinking to a point where they did not see it anymore. Um, and that was in my colon. Then, you have to recuperate from that radiation before you can have the surgery. I recuperated a month.

JEANNE BLAKE: I'm, I'm curious, because of your physical health, what you did during that four months? Did you continue to exercise?

MIKE LANE: Always. I, I needed to. I needed, you know, they say that exercise is the best thing for the brain and it definitely was, I needed to do it to prove to myself that I was healthy enough to beat this because everybody that I went to see, every doctor that I saw, used that term. They would say, you're so healthy. This is gonna be a piece of cake. I went over it by if I'm so healthy, why do I have this? To me, I wasn't healthy any more. To me the health image was gone, that I wasn't healthy. But because the rest of my body, because I had taken care of myself, that it was gonna be a lot easier.

JEANNE BLAKE: I just, I hear that from so many people. I mean, you know, you mentioned Lance Armstrong earlier, but I hear from cancer survivors who've gone into treatment, who are strong and healthy and um, that they, that they have an advantage.

MIKE LANE: I would try my best to ride every day through the whole treatment. Of course, some of the times I was um, doing treatment during the winter time, at which time I continued to ski. A funny story is when I was on chemo the second time, it was a different kind of treatment, they would actually come to my house and hook me up to chemo for 5 days. It was an infusion for 5 days, and the chemo was in a fanny pack with a little pump and the pump would continually infuse chemo into my body for 5 days. Um, and the visiting nurses are the people that would do this. They would show up at the house and set up the appointments ahead of time, they'd show up at the house and give me my fanny pack and give me my new pump with a new battery in it, and I used to be waiting for them in the driveway so

that as soon as they hooked me up I could go on my bike and, and be mobile. And that was the great thing about the technology was that it allowed me to be mobile.

JEANNE BLAKE: But I want to ask, were you tired during this time, you pushed through it because of determination, yes?

MIKE LANE: Yes, I was tired. There's no doubt about it. People would, not as tired as um, a lot of people expressed, people used to offer me rides to go get treatment and I couldn't understand why somebody would need a ride. You know, I don't like to be driven so I can't, I just, I think it really boggled my mind that people needed to be driven to get, you know, a couple hours worth of treatment.

JEANNE BLAKE: I'm curious Mike. Did you lose your hair?

MIKE LANE: No, I didn't.

JEANNE BLAKE: That's amazing. Well, first of all, you've got beautiful hair.

MIKE LANE: Thank you.

JEANNE BLAKE: But I'm um, did they, the doctors have an explanation for that?

MIKE LANE: It thinned out, um, considerably, and it was, it was funny because you know because people do make fun of the fact that I did not lose my hair, because they said if I had lost my hair, the whole image would have been gone completely.

JEANNE BLAKE: Laughing. Mr. Health just couldn't be, you know.

MIKE LANE: You know, bald Mr. Health. But um, yeah, it thinned, my family, my, my three girls were just amazed that I didn't because they were mentally prepared to have a bald dad for a while so...

JEANNE BLAKE: Family support's unbelievably important, whether it's your own family, or extended family, just um, I want to hear how your girls who were in their teens at the time,

MIKE LANE: Well actually, one um, my girls right now are 28, 24 and 18. They were older. Um, my, my middle one was still in college and of course, um, the oldest one lives in Connecticut, and of course, they were, they were just devastated at this, they didn't, they didn't quite know what to do. Um, my older two daughters had lost their mom quite earlier in life and they thought this was it. Now they were going to lose their dad. So they started preparing and, and trying to figure out what to do and, and the one that was at college started talking to her friends and one of her friends had a mom who was a nurse practitioner, happened to be in the field, and she painted an awfully bleak picture of this for this my, my daughter so she had totally awful thoughts about what might happen to me. The 18 year old was probably the strongest.

JEANNE BLAKE: So, as a family, you talked about this openly?

MIKE LANE: Very openly. As soon, as soon as I found out, I called them. I called all three of them separately. As soon as I found out because I needed to, that's, that's how I am.

JEANNE BLAKE: And you kept the conversations going?

MIKE LANE: Constantly.

JEANNE BLAKE: There's, you know, I've, I've also on this program and just in life, talked with people who handle it differently. A friend of mine, Dr. Paula Rauch, she's at Mass General Hospital, um, has written a book and does a lot of work to help families where a parent is living with a potentially life-threatening disease um, have conversations about it and I, I got the sense that your family probably was open, but if, I, I guess you probably can't imagine not sharing this with your girls but how lucky they are that you did.

MIKE LANE: Right. I can't, I can't imagine not sharing it. It would, it would eat away at me if I knew that something was wrong with me and I wasn't letting on to them. I mean sometimes they'll even say to me, not so much about this but they'll say Dad, I didn't need to know that.

JEANNE BLAKE: TMI. (laughing)

MIKE LANE: Too much information, right. All the time.

JEANNE BLAKE: So Mike, you, um, underwent surgery after four months of radiation, and they removed part of your colon, correct?

MIKE LANE: Yep.

JEANNE BLAKE: And then, and then you had chemo after that? I had six months of chemo after that. And then it was a full year after your original diagnosis that, um, we mentioned earlier, another tumor was found in your liver. Tell us about that?

MIKE LANE: After the initial operation, I did the six months of chemo and then after that, I went every three months for a PET scan. And at the time they told me that PET scans were fantastic, but they also

showed a lot of false positives. That they show so much, um, which, you know, I said well, that's good, if there's anything there, we're gonna find out. And I kept going in for the PET scans every three months and all the reports kept coming back fine, that everything was great.

JEANNE BLAKE: And what was your, your emotional state at this point, were you feeling like, I'm clear?

MIKE LANE: I thought, this was it. It's done, it's over, you just, you know, I, I did the surgery, I've done every they've told me to do, I've followed it by the book, and um, it worked. You know, they were right. And then a year later through a PET scan, they suspected something. And um, from there it was a biopsy into the liver, and through the biopsy we discovered that it was cancer again.

JEANNE BLAKE: And your reaction?

MIKE LANE: I told everybody that we, I was gonna treat this like toothache. That it was just, you know, we're gonna go in, everybody told me, oh, Mike you can operate on a liver, don't worry about it, you just cut a little piece off, and it'll grow back, and um, that's what I did, I told the girls, I said this to my three daughters, I said I'm just gonna treat this like a little tooth ache, we're gonna go in, we're gonna have this taken out, I'm gonna go back on chemo again for 6 more months afterward and then we'll be done with it because this time it'll be gone.

JEANNE BLAKE: And is that what happened?

MIKE LANE: And that's exactly what happened.

JEANNE BLAKE: And so you didn't go back to having those grim feelings again?

MIKE LANE: No, oh, no.

JEANNE BLAKE: And so now you're how, three years out from that last surgery. And you get regular checkups obviously? And you're feeling great and everything's clear?

MIKE LANE: I feel fantastic. I go every six months, um, for PET scans which are going to move to every year, once a year, I don't like that, but that's the protocol, you know, I'd still rather go every three months.

JEANNE BLAKE: Yeah, yeah,

MIKE LANE: Just to have that security. Going out to every year now.

JEANNE BLAKE: So it still kind of rattles around in your brain?

MIKE LANE: It certainly does.

JEANNE BLAKE: It's just what every person with cancer says, is that never really goes away?

MIKE LANE: It never really leaves. And with me, it's all about the stomach. It's all about the intestines and you know, you get, you eat something that you shouldn't have eaten maybe and you have a stomach ache and the little light goes on and you say, uh, oh, I wonder what's going on?

JEANNE BLAKE: I think that this is actually a good time for us to talk about what the symptoms are that people can experience, even though you say that you had none of them because, um, many people who have colon cancer will experience those. We'll put these on the screen, because I think

that, you know, just as you say, this can happen to any of us, any day that when they endure for a period of time it's important to see the doctor.

MIKE LANE: Very important.

JEANNE BLAKE: Okay. There are diarrhea, constipation or feeling that the bowel doesn't empty completely, either bright red or very dark blood in the stool, general abdominal discomforts, such as frequent gas pains, bloating, fullness, and/or cramps, weight loss with no known reason, constant tiredness and vomiting. But you say that you felt none of these?

MIKE LANE: No, I didn't.

JEANNE BLAKE: So you've been really outspoken about your experience. In part because you come from a relatively small town and you're a well-known and beloved figure there, so people asked you to participate in things. But, you get something out of talking about it and...

MIKE LANE: I certainly do. It's amazing. I can't tell you the number of people that call me that somehow find out what I've gone through. Not friends, or anything, not acquaintances, but they call and say you don't know me but I found out who you are and, of course I'm easy to find out, because I work for the Town of Marblehead, so it's very easy to find me, and they'll know somebody or perhaps they have been diagnosed with cancer it's not all colorectal cancer, people call me for all kinds of cancer just to find out what the treatment was like,

JEANNE BLAKE: Uh, huh.

MIKE LANE: Where to go, what to do, and what my attitude was like. That's why I like to go out and tell people about it. Because I, in my mind, I'm three years out, and they say the magic number is five,

but I know that in five years everything will be fine because I, I feel so good again. I feel, I feel better than I did before and if I can help somebody, that's what it's all about.

JEANNE BLAKE: You were the spokesperson for the, for the walk that raised funds for the North Shore Medical Center a few years ago, that was just part of your ongoing campaign now to a face of a healthy person and a survivor.

MIKE LANE: I was so proud, that the North Shore Cancer Center had cured me. That I wanted to help them because the funds go directly to purchase new equipment, actually I know go there for my PET scans as a result of those funds. But I was so proud that they worked hard to fix me, to cure me, that I wanted to make sure that everybody knew about it.

JEANNE BLAKE: Mike, what, what is different about the way that you live your life? You were already living a very healthy lifestyle, has anything changed? Have, do you eat differently?

MIKE LANE: Not too much. Especially during the summer.

JEANNE BLAKE: I wondered what was behind that. Maybe you were (laughing)

MIKE LANE: Cookouts. Um, I do try to watch what I eat. I don't eat a lot of junk. Um, I, I try to follow the book, but of course, like I say, it's summer time and I also want to enjoy things, I want to be and have a good time just like everybody else.

JEANNE BLAKE: Um, hm..

MIKE LANE: It's hard to follow it by the book. I'm not a vegetarian. One of my daughter's is.

JEANNE BLAKE: Um, hm.

MIKE LANE: And then, and it's hard for me to cook for her. I try to watch what I eat, but I, I also think that I counteract a lot of it with the exercise.

JEANNE BLAKE: Uh, huh. So what you're saying really is that sometimes you eat red meat?

MIKE LANE: I do.

JEANNE BLAKE: Okay. But lots of fruits and vegetables because...

MIKE LANE: Lots of fruits and vegetables.

JEANNE BLAKE: And do you take, I'm curious, because the American Cancer Society recommends a daily vitamin. Do you take vitamins?

MIKE LANE: I take mega doses of vitamins.

JEANNE BLAKE: You do?

MIKE LANE: I also went to a holistic health center during treatment, the second time around, the second time around I went down to Ft. Lauderdale and as a result of that I do take mega doses of vitamins.

JEANNE BLAKE: How do you think that your outlook on life is different?

MIKE LANE: I value it much more than I did before. Not too much matters to me. You know. I have a great attitude. As a matter of fact, the girls, my three girls have said that to me as well. They've said, you know, Dad that used to bother you. And I say, well a lot used to bother me. How come it doesn't anymore? I said because it really doesn't matter.

JEANNE BLAKE: So you've put things into perspective?

MIKE LANE: Put things into huge perspective.

JEANNE BLAKE: Yeah,

MIKE LANE: Just enjoy it. You know, go out and have fun and enjoy it. I love what I do for work. And I think that's important. I can get up every morning and know where I'm going. Know that I'm going to have fun when I get there.

JEANNE BLAKE: Yeah, well you're lucky. A lot of people can't do that. But what people can do, um, only 50% of people over the age of 50 get a colonoscopy every year. What would you say to the people who are putting it off for some reason?

MIKE LANE: It's the simplest test going, it's, it's easier than going to the dentist. It's the simplest test going and why put it off, you don't know what's going on, the, the image is awful, I realize that, the image is just my goodness, what's gonna happen? How's this gonna feel? And you don't feel anything. You wake up and you say, that's it? You can go home and somebody drive you home and, and the next day you're back at everything normal. It's the simplest test, to save your life.

JEANNE BLAKE: And again, colorectal cancers are slow growing and that's why early detection is so important. I mean it starts

MIKE LANE: Right, it can be taken care of immediately.

JEANNE BLAKE: You know, finding a polyp that might become a cancer can, can save your life.

MIKE LANE: Right. Matter of minutes. Sure it can. A matter of minutes during a colonoscopy.

JEANNE BLAKE: Mike, thanks so much for coming in and talking with us. I appreciate it. We wish you the best and thank you for joining us for this edition of *About Health TV*. I'm Jeanne Blake. I'll see you next time.

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