

At what age did you first notice you hearing loss? How did that loss at first manifest itself?

I remember my golden birthday, July 9th, 1965, my parents took me to Stillwater, the birthplace of Minnesota, to the Lowell Inn for dinner. I had suffered on and off for several years with ear infections, and that evening my hearing was so muffled that I thought I was going deaf. Long story short, ironically I felt safe amidst muffling and became a professional head-nodder. My hearing has been deficient since grade school, however we never talked about this in my home.

What was your emotional response to realizing that you have hearing loss? I didn't get a formal diagnosis for my hearing loss until 2016. After the audiologist explained to me my degree of hearing loss I felt bittersweet about the loss; I felt I received the confirmation I needed to know I wasn't crazy, and at the same time I needed to adjust to a new instrument, the hearing aid.

How severe is your hearing loss? How well can you hear with your hearing aids?

I do not wear my hearing aids when home alone, or writing just because I have glasses and sometimes wires and frames run into a confrontation of sorts. I wear them whenever I am with people to avoid head-nodding.

How did/does your hearing loss affect your career as a teacher? For a number of years I noticed a subtle decline in my ability to hear. For teaching this became a serious concern as I was always asking students to repeat what they just said. I hate to say it but after the third ask head-nodding takes over.

How did/does your hearing loss affect your day-to-day life? I don't see it really affecting my day-to-day activities. I live in a small house so I don't get complaints from shared walls about my television volume.

Do you belong to any support groups for people with hearing loss? I do not.

What advice would you give to anyone experiencing hearing loss? Don't ignore it. Listen to your own voice and seek aid.

How did you first come to realize that you had breast cancer? When I went in for a mammogram test in 2014, except when I arrived at the clinic I was told I was a day late, and I was asked if I would like to reschedule. This seemed odd to me at the time; I'm a bit of a worry wart about appointments and it was out of character for me to screw up the date. Nevertheless I made an appointment for the following day due to a cancellation in their books. Immediately after the mammogram I was told I needed to schedule an appointment for a biopsy. Again due to a cancellation I was able to drive to Anoka that same day for the biopsy. After the biopsy the doctor informed me that he would have the results by the next morning and he would give me a call. I asked him how long he had been in practice and he said over 40 years. I then asked him his professional thoughts on whether I was possibly looking at a cancerous situation and he respectfully confirmed that it was his hunch, but he wanted to

confirm this. I went home that afternoon somewhat dazed, yet I felt somewhat prepared for unfortunate news due to the doctor's candid statements. I received a call at 8:10 the next morning confirming I had breast cancer.

What was your emotional reaction to this news? As I stated earlier, I felt a bit dazed, shocked, freaked, scared, but I didn't buy an urn. I didn't update my will. I never liked my breasts anyway so that's how I went into the news.

What treatment courses did you undergo? I had a double mastectomy, and an oral chemo. Also an oral medication for five years. After my surgery I elected reconstruction surgery.

Are you undergoing treatment now? no

Did your breast cancer affect you daily life? Yes. Of course. When something life-threatening comes knocking on your door and opens it up without your invitation, life becomes changed, forever.

Do you belong to any breast cancer survivor support groups? I did belong to a breast cancer support group for six years. I met some incredible people, made some life friends, and we started our own support group outside of Allina called Sisters Strong.

How are you feeling these days? I feel good

What advice would you give to women regarding their health? Be your own advocate. Trust your health care professionals, talk frankly with them and they will be a tremendous comfort, truly.

Anything you'd like to add, either about your hearing loss or your cancer diagnosis? **Life is good.**