

PART ONE OF SEVEN

# CANCER

## A CODE RED PROJECT

*Cancer starts when one mutated cell out of the 50 trillion cells that make up our bodies slips away from the normal controls that regulate how cells divide.*

Cope continued from // BA8

"I can acknowledge that sometimes we can't cure it and sometimes people's lives end because of it but it's those other things that drive me crazy.

"I'm a mom as well, so when I think of a breast cancer patient's children and having to cope without their mom, that's heartbreaking. You can easily put yourself in those shoes."

**KEN ORMEROD** is a 69-year-old retired truck driver who lives near Parkdale and Barton in east end Hamilton.

He's been nervously eyeing the calendar for some time now. Five years of cancer-free survival is typically used as the unofficial goalpost for considering a patient "cured" — if there is such a thing — and October marks five years exactly since Ormerod was first diagnosed with lung cancer.

He's part of a depressingly exclusive club — fewer than one in five lung cancer patients in Ontario makes it to the five-year mark, one of the worst survival rates for any type of cancer.

It was October 2008 when he got the news from his doctor. Ormerod had been losing weight and his appetite had disappeared.

An X-ray and a CT scan showed a small black spot the size of a dime on the lower part of his right lung.

"Next thing you know, I'm on the slab having an operation about a week later," said Ormerod. "Never had chemo or nothing like that, they just took part of the bottom right lobe out and you're OK. It happened so fast, I never had a chance to realize what was going on.

"It was blessing in a way," he added. "I didn't really have time to sit and stew for months about what's going on."

In fact, it all happened so fast, Ormerod said he didn't even have a chance to quit his pack-a-day smoking habit.

"I smoked right up until the day of the operation," he said.

"The night before, I was out in the back shed having a cigarette and I was down at St. Joe's at 5:30 or 6 o'clock the next morning. The last cigarette I ever had was in that shed the night before."

The first cigarette he ever had was back in the English town of Preston, a former textiles hub north of Manchester that's fallen on hard times since the end of the Second World War.

"They used to give you cigarettes in England basically to get you addicted to it," said Ormerod. "There were no warnings or anything like that when I first started smoking.

"You went to a dance or a work party and at each plate there would be a little package with three cigarettes in it, so everybody basically smoked back then. That's how they got you started."

You can take the boy out of Lancashire but it's tough to shake that north England accent out of the man, even when nearly half a century has passed.

Ormerod came to Canada in 1965 when he was 21. His first wife, also a smoker, died of lung cancer in 2005.

Ormerod hasn't had a cigarette since he walked out of the hospital five years ago.

Luck continues // BA11



PHOTO BY GARY YOKOMAKA, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR



Steve Rudaniecki was diagnosed with leukemia in April 2003, on his 51st birthday. Told he had five years, he's lived 10.

*'It's an issue of social justice but it's also an issue of efficiency and how we spend our tax dollars on health care. And we could be spending them a great deal better if there was a way to even out these statistics.'*

**NEIL JOHNSTON**  
EPIDEMIOLOGIST AND FACULTY MEMBER, MCMASTER UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE

PHOTO BY JOHN RENNING, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

### PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE 15 YEARS AND OLDER LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY LINE

