# Tribute to Harry Pinchot

January 24, 2008 - With deep regret, PCRI announces the passing of Harry Pinchot.

Harry Pinchot was widely recognized as perhaps the most knowledgeable layman concerning prostate cancer – its biology, its prevention, and its treatment. While this was a remarkable achievement, it was, in a sense, inevitable, because Harry had a passionate belief in the importance of education and the application of continuing education to practical realities. In his case, this became prostate cancer.

As a young man, Harry's education did not come easily. Born in Chicago in 1940, he was only able to continue his schooling until he earned his high school diploma. At that point, he had to give up his plan to attend Northwestern University, because of the need to help with the family's finances. He married Dee Heffernan in August, 1960. Three years later, April was born, followed by Brad in 1965 and Kathy in 1966. College seemed out of the question, but Harry didn't accept that. For the next 12 years, he continued his education in night school classes.

Throughout his entire life, Harry's belief in the importance of education never waned. All three of his children earned college degrees, and his grandchildren apparently will follow suit. For example, his eldest grandchild, 15-year-old Genevieve, is an A student pursuing a pre-med education as part of her high school curriculum. Her unswerving goal is to become a medical researcher specializing in prostate cancer. If funds become available, she almost surely will reach that goal, and extend the legacy of Harry Pinchot's campaign to eliminate prostate cancer as a killer of men.

In the early days, Harry probably wasn't even aware of the existence of prostate cancer. He took jobs in various fields, steadily learning more and more. Eventually, he entered the airline industry with Continental Airlines, rising and achieving a significant management position before going into an under-car auto parts warehousing business for himself.

It seemed as though self-education and hard work had enabled Harry to overcome all of the hurdles he faced. But then, in 1995, a far greater hurdle emerged. Harry was diagnosed with prostate cancer. The diagnosis did not seem life-threatening at first. His PSA was relatively high, but a biopsy did not reveal any cancer. Five months later, however, his PSA had

risen to 33, and the diagnosis had changed to "metastatic prostate cancer." He was given 12-18 months to live.

Harry refused to accept that sentence. Instead, he embarked on a self-education program so focused and extensive that it not only extended his life by more than ten years, but also resulted in a program that has helped literally thousands of men stricken with prostate cancer.

Girding up for the fight, he sold his business, downsized his home, and prepared himself to concentrate all his efforts on his fight against prostate cancer. Culling information from universities, research centers, and leading prostate cancer experts, he learned all he could about the disease. Then he began a treatment program. In 1995, however, the information and the available technology were far less than they are today, and he had to learn the hard way the drawbacks and side effects of treatments he underwent. He also learned what did work – things like PC SPES, which sustained him for years until it was withdrawn from the market. And, of course, he was amassing an enormous amount of information and developing a network of physicians and researchers with whom he could exchange new and advanced treatment and prevention information.

Soon, he joined the Prostate Group of Los Angeles, the country's oldest prostate cancer support group devoted to educating and empowering men afflicted with the disease. Harry both shared his information and learned from the experiences and research of others there, and became Chairman of the Group. In early 1997, he learned that a new nationwide organization, the Prostate Cancer Research Institute (PCRI), was being formed by Drs. Stephen Strum and Mark Scholz, oncologists specializing in prostate cancer who were determined to provide men throughout the country with basic knowledge of the disease as well as serve as a clearing-house of the rapidly advancing developments in its treatment. Dr. Strum immediately saw the wealth of information and determination that resided in Harry, and he hired him as the first employee of the fledgling PCRI.

Harry plunged right into this exciting new job, and became its program director. In this capacity, he developed a program to effectively disseminate basic and developing information concerning prostate cancer and its treatment to prostate cancer patients, their families, and their health caregivers worldwide. While organizing this program, he personally manned the phones, speaking directly to these people, supplying them with information, and answering their questions. He soon became widely known as "Helpline Harry." In the evenings, he moderated prostate cancer support groups throughout Southern California and helped them grow into effective channels to provide prostate cancer information directly to patients. For Harry, eighty-hour work weeks were common.

Despite this heavy workload at the PCRI, Harry found time to participate in the work of other organizations devoted to helping men with prostate cancer. He was a founding member of the Prostate Cancer Action Network, a group organized to educate and inform legislative bodies about the need for financial support for prostate cancer research and to provide

Medicare with the information and clinical results that would justify the health insurance coverage of new medicines and treatments. Nationally, he was a Regional Director and a member of the Board of Directors of US TOO! International, the oldest and largest national prostate cancer support organization. In the Los Angeles area, he was a member of the California Prostate Cancer Coalition's Board of Directors, a member and speaker for the American Cancer Society's Prostate Initiative Team, and a member of the Advisory Board for California's IMPACT program that provides care to indigent men.

At the same time, Harry kept current with the evolving development of prostate cancer information. Voraciously, he read the prostate cancer literature, including the flood of new papers that were beginning to stream forward from worldwide sources by the turn of the century. And not only did he read these papers, he discussed them with their authors. His network within the prostate cancer community just grew and grew. In the process of his self-education and work with prostate cancer organizations, Harry became recognized as an expert in the field despite his lack of a formal medical education. He was one of the very few men without an M.D or a PhD. who has been invited consistently to the Prostate Cancer Foundation's Scientific Conference, and he was a member of the prestigious Journal Club, an organization of physicians who meet to review and evaluate papers covering new developments in prostate cancer treatment.

Supported by this medical network, he was able to pass on the resulting new information to prostate cancer patients via the PCRI helpline; its quarterly journal, *Insights*; a flow of booklets; and the regional and national conferences the PCRI produced almost every year. For these conferences, Harry organized the conference curricula, contacted the best experts to present important data at those conferences, and even developed the audio-visual systems to support their presentations. (Yes, Harry was a computer whiz, too, and, of course, he taught himself this skill.) In addition, Harry organized and moderated "Town Hall" meetings that brought about 35 patients with advanced prostate cancer face to face with leading prostate cancer physicians and researchers who answered specific questions from these patients that dealt with their cases. Town Hall meetings were held twice in Los Angeles, once in Chicago, and once in Washington D.C. DVDs of these meetings were distributed to advanced prostate cancer patients at no charge.

Not one to limit himself to a single medium, Harry also spread prostate cancer information via both radio and television, as well as the Internet. He has done a two-hour session about prostate cancer on the Group Room radio call-in talk show, and he has appeared on television with leading oncologists specializing in prostate cancer. In 2005, during Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, he participated in a PCRI-sponsored four-part cable TV series to inform men about how to deal with the threat of prostate cancer.

Harry's work and accomplishments did not go unnoticed by the prostate cancer community. Well-deserved awards were bestowed on him by many different organizations. For example, the American Cancer Society presented its 2004 Bill Dehn Memorial Award to Harry as the most inspirational cancer survivor. Also, the Los Angeles Chapter of Fund Raising

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Professionals gave Harry its Spirit of Philanthropy Award as "the Samaritan who best exemplifies commitment and effort to help his fellow man." And in 2006, the Prostate Cancer Foundation singled out Harry for special recognition at its international meeting, where Founder and Chairman Michael Milken summed up the feelings of the prostate cancer community well in his letter to Harry, saying:

> "Your many years of dedicated efforts to defeat prostate cancer, as well as your guidance and support for countless men around the world has helped bring us closer to the goal of eliminating this devastating disease."
>
> "You've raised awareness about prostate cancer, helped raise funds for research, and intensified the focus on finding a cure. We're honored to count you as a friend and partner."
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> "On behalf of all of us at the Prostate Cancer Foundation and the millions of men and their families who are battling this disease, please accept our deepest gratitude."

Harry Pinchot often said that he would have traded these and all the other accolades he has received for the knowledge that his work led to winning the war against prostate cancer. He could not claim victory, but by so effectively making use of the decade that had extended beyond his 1995 death sentence, he certainly had the right to say, "I made a difference. I made my mark. I am proud of what I did with the time granted me."

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