

# Survival and Hope Life After Cancer



**T SMITH, AGE: 60**  
PROSTATE CANCER

## The Basics:

- **Resides:** Big Bear
- **Occupation:** Writer for TV since 1993, "Moesha" is the one he worked on the longest
- **Family:** Lives in Michigan. Three sisters, a brother, daughter, 25, girlfriend Naomi Oyadomari (she has a son, 22 and daughter, 24)
- **Hobbies:** Politics, basketball, watching sports, coached middle school basketball for two years (2016-17)
- **Philosophy:** Just be positive and keep living your life. I don't define life by my disease. I have fun and continue to do what I have been doing.

Nearly 30 years ago, Big Bear resident Thomas Smith, 60, started calling himself T Smith III to distinguish himself in the entertainment world, where he was doing standup comedy.

The name stuck throughout his career, which started as a casting assistant. Now he is a professional writer for television and, among others, his credits include the TV sitcom "Moesha," which ran on the United Paramount Network from January 1996 to May 2001.

Smith lost his health insurance when he did not work enough

hours in Writers Guild of America West shows. He eventually got insurance through the Affordable Care Act.

"I went five years without insurance," Smith said. "I had lost Writers Guild insurance - I hadn't done a show for five years."

Once he had insurance again, Smith went in for a checkup. "The doctor suggested a blood test because of my age - and my PSA (prostate-specific antigen) levels were high," he said. "They did a biopsy, and it came back positive and it was late stage."



Upon hearing his diagnosis, "I cried for about five minutes because I was alone," Smith said. The doctor "had no bedside manner. His approach was not very comforting: 'You have cancer, if it has spread to your bones or organs, you have two years.'"

Smith reacted to the news with a positive attitude. "I was like, eh, I ain't believing this. It's going to take a lot more than prostate cancer to kill me," he said.

Smith says he is not sure he wants to follow conventional therapies and is taking a wait-and-see approach to the future.

"I laugh a lot, I try to stay very, very positive, and I guess I am somewhat in denial, but it is what it is. But I'm OK with it. That's my approach to it," he said.

"My PSA is lower now. I haven't been very proactive with my cancer. I was supposed to have surgery, but I didn't. I am still searching for the one thing that will beat this."

"It is late stage but it hasn't spread.

I have been to City of Hope and Keck Medical; they both said I should have surgery."

Smith is drawn to holistic medicine but has discovered "to fight it holistically is very expensive."

So he is trying "different supplements and things. I never tried marijuana until I was 58. I started off on CBD oil (cannabidiol, a chemical compound found in marijuana). A lot of people are saying that is the best way to fight prostate cancer," he said.

One conventional approach he did try is hormone therapy.

"I was given a testosterone blocker," Smith said, "and I was always in a bad mood, I had night sweats, I was full of a lot of raging emotions."

Smith's daughter and his girlfriend, Naomi Oyadomari, are not completely on board with his treatment decisions.

"My daughter would like for me

“They did a biopsy, and it came back positive and it was late stage.”

to have surgery, as well as my girlfriend. They want to see me live as long as possible," he said.

But Smith, who "started reading a lot of positive-thinking books when I was in seventh or eighth grade" is comfortable with his decision.

"You never know what's going to take you out," he said. "My philosophy is it's life, you live it. You have as much fun as you can, travel, meet new people, eat as much good food as you can, and one day that all ends.

Smith says the decision not to have surgery is the biggest obstacle he has faced. That "and changing my diet," he said. "I was 6-foot-4 and 285 pounds. I feel better at 245 pounds and hope to lose 10 more pounds."

Rather than seek out a support group, Smith said, "I called a childhood friend. He and his brother were diagnosed with prostate cancer six years ago."

"I never saw the necessity for (a support group). I am a talkative person, and I pretty much share my journey with prostate cancer with anyone who wants to listen. Maybe in the future, depending on what path I take."

That doesn't mean he is not involved with cancer support efforts.

"I run a comedy show every Friday at the Holiday Inn in Victorville called Ha Ha Live," Smith said. He, Oyadomari, and a partner produce the show. "They are pretty good comics. I am sometimes amazed at the great talent we pull in our little town of Victorville."

"We do fundraisers for cancer," he said. The show has done events for Relay for Life and its most recent event was "a fundraiser on behalf of Vanity Hernandez, who lost her 5-year-old son Leo to a cancer called Langerhans

## Caregiver Perspective



Naomi Oyadomari, 55, is a six-year breast cancer survivor. She teaches middle school for the Lucerne Valley Unified School District. She has been in a relationship with T Smith for about 12 years, and she is his primary support and caregiver.

When she and Smith received his cancer diagnosis, "we were both in shock," she said. But the diagnosis made their relationship stronger. "We went through my cancer, and then finding out about him was shocking at first, but we've been through this before, and we can definitely support each other through it again.

There have been ups and downs, but for the most part (it has been a) positive impact."

Oyadomari said one of the "downs" was when Smith received hormone therapy.

"That was tough for both of us - mostly for him because he just didn't feel like himself. It messed with his emotions," she said.

"I didn't go through that, so I couldn't really understand how he was feeling."

For anyone dealing with a cancer diagnosis and treatment, Oyadomari says, "It sounds cliché but you just take it one day at a time after you get over the initial shock. I learned that not everybody handles it the same way, and you have to respect each individual and how they want to handle it."

### Cell Histiocytosis."

That event, sponsored by Collision Auto Repair Specialists and City of Hope, was held March 23 and was billed as Hop 4 Hope, according to its flyer, "a unique comedy fundraiser to honor the life and memory of Little Leo by raising money to buy Easter baskets that will be donated to the children of The City of Hope Pediatric Oncology Unit."

Prostate cancer is not Smith's first close-up experience with cancer. Oyadomari, his girlfriend of 12 years, is a six-year breast cancer survivor.

Smith says his relationship with Oyadomari has given him support. "Having been in a relationship with someone who has cancer and you watch them go through it, that is what impacted me the most," he said.

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