

January 14, 2004

**Don't miss
this week's ads!**

INDEX

LETTERS
NEWS
OPINION
SPORTS

SERVICES

ARCHIVES
CONTACT US
PLACE AN AD
CLASSIFIEDS
OBITUARIES
CYBERSAVER

RELATED LINKS

Bowes Publishers
Sun Media
Quebecor Media

220 Centre Street
Nipawin, SK
S0E 1E0
Phone: (306) 862-4618
Fax: (306) 862-4566

Coping with cancer 'a real eye opener' for Arborfield woman
Three weeks into her radiation therapy an Arborfield woman receives a letter from the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency informing the 56-year-old patient that she "did not" have breast cancer.

BY BRIAN MCLANE
Journal Staff

Nipawin Journal — Coping with cancer 'a real eye opener' for Arborfield woman

BY BRIAN MCLANE
Journal Staff
ARBORFIELD - Three weeks into her radiation therapy an Arborfield woman receives a letter from the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency informing the 56-year-old patient that she "did not" have breast cancer. Oct. 31, 2003, is a day Susan Schroepfer will not soon forget. That's the day Susan and her husband Robert were driving home for the weekend to Arborfield from the Cancer Clinic in Saskatoon. Susan had just completed three weeks of a six-week-long radiation therapy program.



Susan Schroepfer of Arborfield with letter from the Breast Screening Program in Regina.

"We picked up the mail and I was reading (in the car) the letter from Regina when I said to Robert, 'What on earth is going on here?' I've just completed three weeks of radiation, had a biopsy and underwent a lumpectomy and they're telling me I DON'T have cancer!" Schroepfer was referring to a letter dated Oct. 14, 2003, from the Screening Program For Breast Cancer in Regina, a program of the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, which contained five little words in bolder than normal type: "did not have breast cancer." (The complete sentence in the letter to Schroepfer reads: "We have reviewed your test results and are pleased that you did not have breast cancer.") "I was extremely upset," said Schroepfer in an interview Jan 9. Back at the Cancer Clinic in Saskatoon the following Monday, Schroepfer says the doctor she met with - "Dr. G. Walker was just as upset as I was at how could this have happened and promised to take the matter to the top." Schroepfer gave a copy of the letter to Dr. Walker. The following day, Schroepfer was in the waiting room at the Cancer Clinic in Saskatoon visiting with a woman from Tisdale who was also receiving radiation treatment therapy. During their conversation Schroepfer learned that the Tisdale woman had received a similar letter, to the one Schroepfer had received, from the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency also telling her that she did not have cancer. Schroepfer says Dr. Walker contacted the Breast Cancer Screening Program in Regina to see what was going on. Schroepfer says that she did receive a phone call from Regina and an apology. She was told that it was 'a computer glitch' and that the Agency had no way of knowing how many letters actually went out. "Well that's not good enough for me," Schroepfer said. "We trust our health care system and the communication between Prince Albert, Melfort and Regina, just isn't happening. We want it perfected." Coming to terms with the reality that you have cancer is a stressful experience.

**Canada Wide
Classifieds**

careerad.com
CAREERAD
Find a job.

**Your Best Buy
Classified**

Nipawin, SK
Light snow
The Weather Network -14°
Click for Forecast

"It's an emotional time, both for patient and family members. We don't need added burdens," she said.

Some five months earlier, in May, 2003, Schroepfer took her yearly mammogram test at the Victoria Hospital in Prince Albert. Two weeks later she received a letter informing her "they had found an abnormality and that I should go to Melfort for another mammogram," she said.

Two weeks after the mammogram in Melfort, Schroepfer received a phone call from her doctor (Eric Bodenstab) in Tisdale asking that she and her husband come into the clinic at Tisdale.

"Dr. Bodenstab told me something was detected on the mammogram and he was referring me to a specialist (Dr. Hanson) in Saskatoon."

On July 9, Schroepfer underwent day surgery and had a biopsy on her breast and went home the following day. Three weeks later she was notified by Dr. Hanson that the lump was cancerous and they were booking her for a lumpectomy.

That surgery was completed in Aug. in Saskatoon. Everything went well according to Schroepfer who stayed in hospital overnight.

Following three weeks of recovery at home, she was back at the Cancer Clinic in Saskatoon where Dr. A. El-Gayed informed his patient that all the cancer appears to have been removed, but, "to be on the safe side" that Schroepfer undergo 25 radiation treatments.

Schroepfer completed her "totally painless" radiation treatments Nov. 14. She says that she "feels very good" and calls the experience "a real eye opener."

"I now respect just how precious life is, and how short it can be."

Schroepfer can't say enough good things about the staff at the Cancer Clinic and at the Cancer Lodge in Saskatoon. "They're just wonderful...real angels all of them."

Schroepfer adds, too, that she "had the most phenomenal support system possible.

"My husband, family, co-workers and friends were all very caring and supportive of me." Schroepfer's daughter, Jennifer Frank, who lives in Calgary, was also present for her mother's two surgeries.

Schroepfer has her next checkup in Feb. at the Cancer Clinic, since she will no longer need to go through a breast screening program.

Schroepfer has some advice for other women:

"Get tested. Have a mammogram. Don't put all your faith in letters. If you get a follow up notice, then follow up ASAP. The statistics are frightening: two out of every four women will get breast cancer."

Schroepfer says because of her family history - her mother had breast cancer at age 80 and is now 87 - she herself started to go for mammograms at age 50 and so should all middle-aged women.

"It's so important for women to be aware of their bodies. I myself never did feel the lump I had, and I experienced no pain," Schroepfer said.

"We all tend to procrastinate. Find excuses not to go. I did myself. I would say I'll go after tax time. But, please don't put it off."

Schroepfer is a partner in Arborfield Income Tax Service and is the manager of Pasquia Regional Park.

Tisdale woman
recalls her
experience

TISDALE - Edith Dahl was undergoing chemotherapy when she received a letter from the Screening Program For Breast Cancer in Regina advising her that she did not have breast cancer.

"It stunned me" the 59-year-old Tisdale woman said in a telephone interview Jan. 12.

Dahl had a cancerous lump removed from her breast on March 5, 2003. She began chemotherapy three months later, in June, 2003. Radiation treatments followed and were completed prior to Christmas.

"I did realize at the time (she received the letter) that someone obviously got their wires crossed at one of the offices," Dahl said. "However, the letter could have landed on someone who did not have a good mental outlook."

Dahl says "the screening program is good. And it works."

"It's important that women get tested early and often," she said.

"It was the screening program that detected my cancer. If I had not been on the program it might have taken longer to detect my cancer. You got to get to it early."

Dahl says she did receive an apology by telephone for "the computer glitch" from the Breast Screening Program in Regina. She will be back at the Cancer Clinic in Saskatoon in Feb. for a follow-up.

[back](#)