

Racing for A Cure

By Robert Hess

I've always loved sports cars and I've always wanted to race them but it took a prostate cancer diagnosis to put me into the driver's seat of the Mazda Miata that I'm now racing for prostate cancer awareness.

My first car was a Fiat 500 that I bought in 1959 with money from my paper route. Next came an MGB when I graduated from the Virginia Military Institute – thanks Dad! Then a Porsche 911 in 1970 during my first assignment in Germany. It was amazing to hit the autobahn and legally peg the speedometer at 150 mph.

After Vietnam, though, it was family time so I raced bicycles and drove Volvo sedans.

Fast forward to October 2015 when I received a call from Karen Schwartz (just recently diagnosed with breast cancer) whose husband Johan was racing in the 2015 Pirelli World Challenge for prostate cancer awareness.

Karen invited me to meet Johan at Mazda Raceway. I'm a prostate cancer survivor myself and prostate cancer is a key focus of the non-profit I lead so I jumped in my car and met them at Laguna Seca and watched Johan race. I came away inspired.

The following month I met Dean Case of MazdaSpeed while I was ogling the new 2016 race-ready MX-5 Miata at the LA Car Show. We talked about racing and prostate cancer awareness. At that point, the hook was set.



I researched the SCCA's racing programs and found autocross. Perfect! I sold my motorcycles (my wife was thrilled), bought a used 2010 Mazda Miata, and joined the autocross racing scene. I chose the Mazda Miata because it's very affordable and super reliable. The car puts a smile on my face every time I crank the engine.

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Why racing cars at 71?

At age 58, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer when all of my prostate cancer risk markers were in the normal range. As it turned

out, I had Stage T2A prostate cancer with multiple tumors. Mine was an accidental diagnosis and I was fortunate that I found early when it was treatable.

But not all men are as lucky. Almost 28,000 American men die each year from prostate cancer because they don't know they have the disease in time for effective treatment.

In Vietnam, I was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for rescuing downed helicopter crews. My giveback to society would be helping reduce the prostate cancer death toll. In 2012, I developed a prostate cancer early detection tool using the simple PSA blood test that makes men's prostate cancer risk visible.

I've wrapped my Miata in bright yellow with the Prostate Tracker App logo and I drive it everywhere. It's a guaranteed conversation starter.

Ready to grab some adventure? Want to help stop prostate cancer? Contact us at <http://cancerjourneysfoundation.org/autocross/>