



PARKINSON'S WARRIORS VIGNETTE



BILL MERRITT

Written By: Bill Merritt

Bill Merritt is a Johns Hopkins Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders Center support group member and has Lewy Body Dementia (LBD) with Parkinson's.

Tell us a little about your relationship with Parkinson's Disease.

I was diagnosed with Lewy Body Dementia with Parkinson's 3 years ago. I had noticed a tremor in my right leg. My diagnosis also included stiffness in my right arm, balance problems, and a change in my gait.

After testing side effects of medications, I was prescribed the Exelon patch and Carbidopa/Levodopa to slow the cognitive and Parkinson's problems. I also made a point of continuing my exercising, cycling, and running. I was about six months into my retirement.

It was a change of life for my wife and son, and thankfully my siblings and friends [were there to support me]. It is a family disease, if you are fortunate to not be alone in your struggle. The marriage relationship has changed for my wife and me. She is under stress as all caregivers are. I try to support her as best I can.

My exercise routine has changed since [my diagnosis]. I no longer run, although I walk a couple of miles most days. My biking is now limited to bike trails with friends (no longer on city streets). I changed my bike pedals, so I wasn't limited to wearing bike shoes with clips. My athletic club closed since Covid hit, so I set up a bike on a stand indoors to complement the outdoor rides. I also go to physical therapy regularly with a focus on balance and strength. It helps to not feel alone and to have found help and information



Above: Bill Merritt

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sharing in an LBD support group.

At this point my balance is more challenged, and I experience memory lapses and sometimes confusion as well as occasional constipation and sleep disruption. I stopped driving because of these issues.

My world has gotten smaller in many but certainly not all ways.

When you think of the Parkinson's community, what word comes to mind?

The word would be "isolated" because of the disease and Covid, but also "caring."

What's one piece of advice you would give someone with PD and their community?

Exercise your body, mind, and social interactions to the best of your ability at that point in the progress of the disease.



EXERCISE YOUR BODY, MIND, AND SOCIAL INTERACTIONS TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY

