

# our voice

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LIVING WITH PROSTATE CANCER IN CANADA

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# FULL ACTIVE LIVING BACK ON THE AGENDA

by Henry Rennich

**Henry Rennich** was born in Alberta, where he and his wife Paulina also raised their family, including grandchildren and great grandchildren. After retirement, he looked forward to family time, weekly golf games with his buddies, and his new found freedom to travel with his wife. Then a sudden turn of events changed his life and prompted the start of a new company and a new mission.

**C**ancer was the last thing on my mind when I went for my annual check-up 15 years ago. I certainly wasn't prepared to hear that I'd tested positive for prostate cancer.

On my doctor's advice, I completed a series of radiation treatments, then carried on with my life as best I could while continuing to have regular PSA tests. The results stayed consistently low until into my sixth year, when the tests started to come back revealing a high level of protein in my blood. This time we opted for cryosurgery. Basically, cryosurgery destroys the tumour by "freezing" the prostate gland. I liked the idea of this procedure better than radical prostatectomy, since it's less invasive and usually causes minimal pain and scarring.

## **Secondary effects rocked my world**

Two years and two cryosurgeries later, my PSA level was down. Although I wasn't completely cancer-free, I felt healthy and fit, but now I had a secondary problem I wasn't prepared to deal with — urinary incontinence. I was surprised to learn that this is a very common problem, not only for men who've had prostate surgery but for older men in general. I thought with time and exercises, it would correct itself, but unfortunately that never happened — I remained consistently incontinent.

Urinary incontinence changed my life and my lifestyle drastically. A quick trip to the grocery store could turn into a humiliating experience. Playing golf, going dancing and socializing with friends and family were now stressful ordeals (it wasn't much fun having to always wear a pad or a urine bag, or carry a diaper bag around). Whereas before I'd looked forward to these social events, more and more I now chose to stay home. But I

missed my old active life and especially being around people.

## **A solution in sight**

So I was very excited when my doctor told me about urinary incontinence clamps on the market. However, the ones I tried turned out to be disappointing. They absorbed liquid, were cumbersome and uncomfortable, and just didn't do the job they promised to do. It didn't take me long to figure out why these clamps were ineffective, and I thought I could come up with a better model. Within a day, I had made and was wearing my own prototype. It was definitely crude — plastic and metal and not too pretty — but it worked to control my incontinence. Elated and encouraged, I went on to make further adjustments to the clamp and improve its appearance.

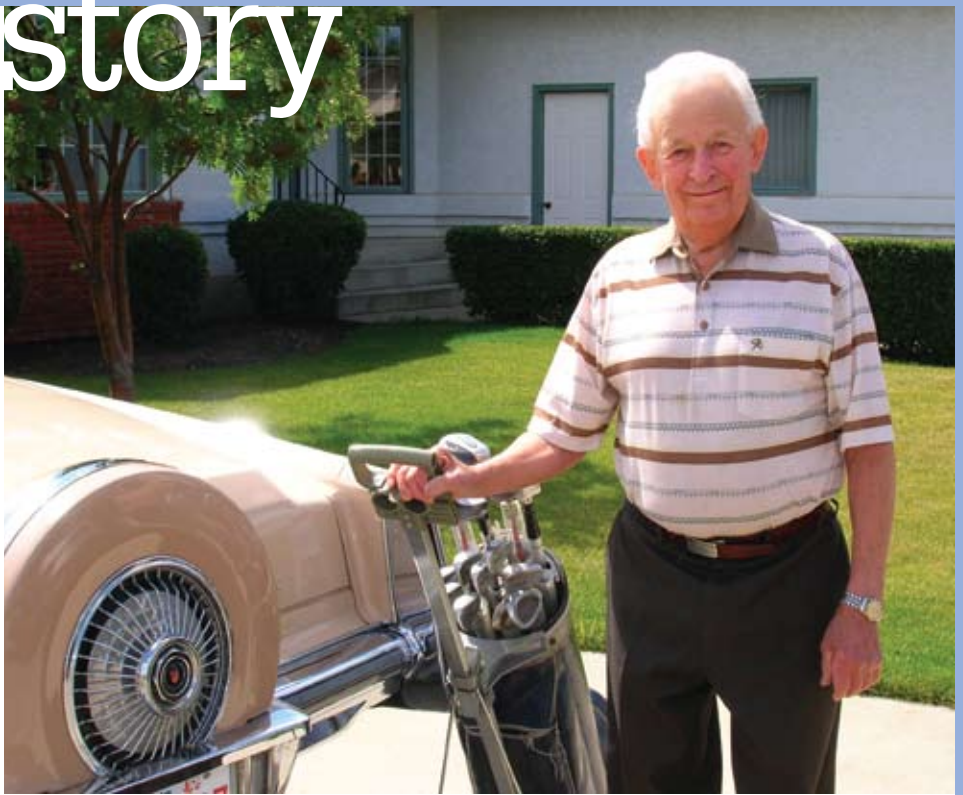
When I showed my invention to my doctor, he was impressed and suggested I try to patent it. I started thinking seriously about selling my incontinence device (I prefer this word, as the



Henry with his daughters: Patricia (left) and Barbara (right)

**“ Urinary incontinence changed my lifestyle drastically — playing golf, going dancing and socializing with friends were now stressful ordeals ”**

# one man's story



term “clamp” sounds somewhat foreboding and has a frightening effect on most men), as I’d discovered there was definitely a need out there. It took several months of testing and redesigning before I came up with something I thought was close to perfect. Men don’t usually like to discuss their incontinence problems, but I came across plenty who were willing to give my design a try. Once I started describing my own situation, and how the apparatus worked to bring my incontinence under control, friends I’d known for years stepped forward and admitted they also suffered with incontinence. I made devices for friends, men I met in my doctor’s office and others who were referred to me by my doctor. We all had a common problem, incontinence, and we all wanted to manage it in order to live a normal, active life.

Although golf, dancing and other social events were back on my calendar thanks to the clamp, I found out it wasn’t quite as perfect as I’d thought when I had to travel out of town on a trip. My device had metal hinges, which set off the alarm when I went through the airport security. I had to follow the security guard into a private room and first reveal, then explain, the apparatus on my penis. Not wanting to go through that again, back I went to the drawing board — the design needed just a bit more work. Now, I believe I’ve come up with a device that meets the needs of most men with urinary incontinence: it’s effective, user-friendly, washable, comfortable, and has no “alarming” metal parts.

## A mission to help other men

I then decided to move forward with my idea; I set up Rennich Industries Ltd., obtained my medical device licence, applied for a patent and registered trademark and started manufacturing and distributing the Dribblestop® Male Urinary Incontinence Clamp. What started off

as a simple gadget produced out of personal necessity to effectively deal with my own incontinence, turned into a project I hoped would help other men all over the world who suffer needlessly with this embarrassing and sometimes debilitating condition. I get letters and phone calls every day thanking me for my invention.

**“ I want men to know they can deal with their incontinence and get back to enjoying life fully ”**

Of course, the story doesn’t end there. I continue to attend support groups in Calgary, and try to pass the word on that there’s hope for men with prostate cancer, and help for those who have bladder control problems. I also attended the Canadian Prostate Cancer Network conference in Calgary in August 2008, and met a lot of wonderful, supportive people. I want men to know they can learn to deal with their incontinence and get back to enjoying life fully. **ov**

For more information on Dribblestop®, visit Henry’s websites ([www.dribblestop.com](http://www.dribblestop.com); [www.incontinenceclamp.com](http://www.incontinenceclamp.com)) or call his toll-free number: 1-866-748-2548.

