

The Para saved by his dentist

Falkland hero faced another battle when a lump was found in his neck

BY ZOE CHAMBERLAIN

A HERO soldier who featured in an iconic Falklands War photograph has revealed how his life was saved – by his dentist.

John Carey served with the Parachute Regiment for 22 years and was pictured carry-

ing a wounded comrade while under fire during the 1982 conflict.

The dad-of-three survived the war before later retiring with wife Julia to Tamworth, Staffordshire.

But John faced another unexpected battle after a routine trip to the dentist. His hygienist spotted a pea-sized lump in his neck and a biopsy later con-

firmed it was tonsillar cancer.

"It was so lucky because we caught it just in time," said grandad John, 67.

"The specialists said the lump could have burst and spread everywhere in my body.

"The tumour was only the size of my little fingernail, and might have never been found until it was too late."

He added: "If I hadn't been to

my check-up appointment I might not be here.

"I call the hygienist Teresa Jelley, who is now a dentist, my guardian angel."

John underwent six weeks of

radiotherapy and two sessions of draining chemotherapy which he said 'nearly killed me'.

"The consultants said I could

just have radiotherapy and it was my decision whether I had chemotherapy too because of my age," says John, who has 11 grandchildren.

"But they said the chemo would give me a 10 to 20 per cent greater chance of the cancer not coming back, so I said I'd do it.

"I had no problems with my first lot, but the second one nearly killed me.

Hospital

"Everything I ate and drank tasted like copper. I lost three stone in as many weeks and had to be rushed to hospital and put on a drip for 24 hours.

"Ten days later I was still there.

"Having spent 22 years in the army, I'd realised I was dehydrated and said to Julia I just felt like I was wasting away."

Following on from his army training John, who has travelled to nearly 50 countries

with the army, set himself goals to get better.

"A lot of people hear the word cancer and convince themselves they can't get better," he said.

"I was of the attitude I would get better and stayed positive throughout.

"Every two weeks, I sat down with my wife and we talked about what I couldn't do two weeks before and what I could do now.

"I had two operations to re-

move my tonsils and glands in September 2007 and I made it my goal to get to an army reunion in Blackpool the following February. I'd lost half my hair so I looked like I'd been scalped but I made it."

Today, John is as active as ever, although he faces twice yearly check-ups to ensure the cancer does not return.

"I'm so glad I went to the dentist because I had no illness and no side effects from the tumour," says John.

"I would have just been carrying on like normal and by the time I would have realised something was wrong, it may have been too late.

"I had a phone call a couple of weeks ago from a friend whose wife was diagnosed with

cancer of the throat around the same time as me. Sadly, she died because it had gone all the way through her body and had been diagnosed too late."

John is a member of his dentist's Healthy Discounts scheme, which gives money off dental appointments for £5 a month.

Colin Pocock, principal at The Dentist at Liberty Place, says: "John's story reinforces the importance of seeing your dentist regularly – not only for your dental but overall health as well."

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Ex-Parachute
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