



THE SCHMIRTZ REPORT

<https://theschmirtzreport.blogspot.com>

Originally The Schwartz Report, but name taken. "Schmirtz" is smushing Smith and Schwartz together. And since this report has become about both Schwartz AND Smith, the name seemed appropriate. As our lives continue into the unknown, we'll be posting at <https://theschmirtzreport.blogspot.com> rather than emails.

Part 1 – Thursday - Prologue

I've kept this among just a few since we've not known exactly what's happening. Now that we do, more people can know since having told one person in the Parish and now everyone knows something's up. Ron has a brain tumor. Surgery to remove the tumor is scheduled for 7am tomorrow morning. I won't be at Mass.

The whole thing started on Monday when we went to see our new financial advisor about retirement. During that time, Ron was having a hard time getting words to his mouth from his brain and sometimes the words didn't make sense in context. Afterwards, I asked if he was having a hard time and he said, "Yes" in a rather downcast tone. "But I have an appointment for the 12th of July with Dr. Abbott since he's on vacation." I replied, "Like hell! You'll call when we get home and get an appointment NOW because it's a team and they can see you. So, he got an appointment for Thursday. Close enough.

The doc at the appointment did some basic eye coordination testing and reflex testing. Then he said, "I'll be right back." When he returned, he said, and these are his exact words – I'm not making this up – "Run, do not walk, run to the emergency room. Do not pass go. Do not collect \$200.00. They're expecting you.

At the ER, they did a cat scan and found a mass the size of a walnut on the left side of his brain pressing up against his speech center. So, they put him in an ambulance and took him to Swedish Cherry Hill. He was already in the room when I got there. That night, they did a full body scan and found no other problems in the rest of his body.

Part 2 – Saturday – after the whirlwind of parish emails. I'd said no visitors but I got overruled by the patient!

OK, here's the scoop. Ron has said he wants visitors. He's actually had a few from our "family"

yesterday and had a great time. He's awake, alert, ambulatory and the same as usual. The only difference is that his speech is like a stutter on steroids and getting words from his brain to this mouth, something called aphasia. He has no problem with people guessing the word he's trying to say. So, if you wanna visit today, that's great.

Here's the humorous part: his big concern has been that classes for the Summer Quarter begin on Monday. Of course, he was planning on teaching on Sunday.....after the surgery. Maybe Tuesday but he was bound and determined to make sure that things were all taken care of by Tuesday. Um...er...uh....HUH??? So, I went over his head and contacted his department chair letting her know what's up and that she'd need to find another professor to take his classes about which he was highly annoyed. It took the doc and I a half an hour to convince him otherwise. It's SO Ron! The College has been WONDERFUL about this all giving him summer quarter off with full pay and benefits.

Here's what we're up against. The tumor is about the size of a walnut and was produced by the brain itself. Whether it's benign or not won't be discovered until it's biopsied after the surgery. Because it's pushing up against the speech center, there is a question as to what his speech will be like afterwards. This, of course, will affect his abilities to teach which concerns him. It's possible that his teaching days are behind him but at this point we just don't know. If the tumor is not benign, time will be short - a year or so. Not the outcome we want but we all have to be realistic and honest. The tumor is also pushing the inside of his brain to the other side which is weird though the pictures were fascinating. What modern medicine can do!

As usual, Ron is upbeat and chipper even being aware of the serious nature of his diagnosis. (I'd be a basket case!) I'm actually doing OK. Yesterday, I was quite depressed until about 3pm when, in the restroom no less (I felt like Martin Luther who came to the realization of Justification by Faith through Grace while sitting on the "throne") when a voice in my head said, "Everything will be OK. What will be will be." At that point, the depression lifted. I realized that we weren't alone in this venture. Scared to death? Concerned? Wondering about the future? Yes, but not depressed anymore at least for the time being.

Several personal things of which to be aware: 1. I'm actually a deep introvert. I love my alone time and could easily turn into a hermit. At this point, I'm not sure that's really an asset. Yes, I'll want to be by myself to paint and sleep and nest at home. However, being a hermit through all this is probably not the most healthy thing.

2. While this whole episode of life will affect the Parish, I don't want it to overwhelm it. We will definitely need your love and support - that's what Christian and Faith community is all about. At the same time, we have other things we are called to do. Parish life will need to continue as normal to a great extent. The immediate future will be figured out after the surgery. What will probably happen is that I will take July as my vacation month to spend time with Ron while he recuperates. We'll go from there.

There is no need to respond to this update necessarily. I know you all as loving and caring people and that you're all available and wanting to be of assistance. I take that for granted given who you are. However that doesn't mean you CAN'T respond. However, as you may have guessed through the years, I'm not a phone person - a characteristic I recently found out is a classic trait of introverts. However email and text are the best.

So, pray to whomever you pray. I've made the Blessed Mother aware of what's happening though I suspect she's known all along. Prayers to St. Jude probably wouldn't hurt since we still don't know exactly the outcome. Those of you of a nonChristian Tradition pray too. It all gets to the same inbox.

Depending on the outcome of the surgery, I'll send an update on Monday or Tuesday. Possibly tomorrow depending on what shape I'm in.

Much love to you all.

Peace,
Kevin.

8 July Sunday after the Surgery

Well, needless to say, I'm exhausted.

I woke up at 4am, an hour before my alarm went off, made Java and had two cups while texting with Brian Evans which was fun. Then I hopped into the shower and got things together and headed out. Oh, yes, I got dressed too.

Surgery was scheduled for 7am before which Ron had to take a shower in some specially sanitizing soap. So, he'd be up. But when I got there, the room was dark and he was snoring. So, I sat and played with my beads until, unannounced, a Presence came into the room. I knew who She was and then fell asleep.

At 7.30 the lights came on and bustling began. I was asked to collect all of Ron's stuff including his glasses and wedding ring which I did. Lost the ring and then found it again. They'd given him the shower at 3am - nice someone told ME! At 7.45, the anesthesiologist came in. He was about 12 and cute as a button. He explained how the anesthesiology stuff would work. Then he left and the nurses came in and took all the vital signs, asked him his name, date of birth and the other questions they've been asking hourly since Thursday. Let me tell you, those nurses are FANTASTIC. They know their stuff, they're kind and gentle but don't take no for an answer. Then I kissed him on the nose - cuz he was too far away to meet anything else - and off he went in the bed waving his arms and singing, "I'm going to work tomorrow!"

I gathered the bags and headed to the car, put the bags in the trunk and headed to Mickey D's on Rainier for Bacon, Egg, and Cheese biscuits and a diet coke. If you've ever had my coffee you know that one cup for me is like 6 cups for everyone else. So, Diet Coke sounded a bit less intense.

I got back around 9a and found a place on the street to park and, it being Sunday or a Holiday, I didn't have to pay a dime. I started to listen to NPR and quickly fell asleep and was awakened by my phone at 10am. It was my best friend, Bob, formerly the Vicar of All Saints Church in Parkland near PLÜ. He had just arrived to spend the duration. We went to the cafeteria and got coffee and sat in the waiting room and chatted. I've known Bob for decades and he's like my sister. He lived through the death of my first husband over thirty years ago. I've been with him when his partner almost died about 10 years ago. We've been through everything together and he was the right person at the right time. It was also the first time I (and he!) got quite emotional about the whole

thing. And it was very good.

About noon the doc showed up with the news. They had no trouble getting the tumor out and they think they got it all. Ron will need chemo and radiation just to make sure. As to the nature of the tumor, pathology isn't done examining it so as to whether it is cancerous is still unanswered. I'm sure he'll need to borrow wigs and turbans until his hair grows back. 😎

Since Ron was still in recovery, Bob and I went to Taco Time and got lunch. Let me tell ya, beans and hospitals aren't a great pairing choice but we enjoyed lunch even if we were rather odiferous by the time we got back to Cherry Hill.

We took the elevator up to the second floor to the same room he'd been admitted to. A different Doc was trying to get him to raise his arms. He was having none of it. When the Doc raised his arm for him, he could keep it up there, but wasn't in the mood for following directions.

The nurse was yet another gorgeous 12 year old with a sense of humor. Ron was wearing boxing gloves because he kept wanting to rip the bandages off his head.



"You take d'blond! I'll take d'one in d'toyban!"

That's what he looked like. Jewish Taliban. With the catheter in he felt like he needed to pee so was cranky that they weren't letting him outa bed to go. The nurse kept explaining but the

anesthesia hadn't yet worn off so he just got crankier. Because of the anesthesia, he sounded a bit drunk but when I asked his name he had no trouble responding correctly. And he knew my name. And he had no trouble expressing his great displeasure in not being allowed to go pee. His speech was pretty clear and a lot better than it's been in the last week. He didn't have to search for words he couldn't say and the feistiness was a good sign too. Most of the time he had his eyes closed.

The doc had asked if he was in pain and he said yes. When I asked, he said no. So, he was being honest with someone. He recognized Bob - who had been one of the two best men at our wedding - and even smiled.

I did some short paperwork with the nurse and then I said I was exhausted and, since he'd be asleep all day, that I was going home. He said, "Good idea." I kissed him on the schnoz again and told him I loved him and then we moved towards the door. Then, just to be ornery, I turned and said, "By the way, are you going to work tomorrow?" He opened his eye widely and glared at me. I couldn't help but laugh. The nurse nearly died since he'd had this conversation with Ron before we'd arrived.

So, that's the update. The next will probably be the results of the pathology report. But at this point, it's all "so far, so good." Your prayers and best wishes have meant more to us than you will ever know. While I don't believe God decided to heal some people and not heal others, I think that prayer transfers some sort of energy to the one in need provided s/he is open enough receive it. How that all works is anyone's guess. So, keep it coming.

As to visiting, today probably isn't the best day (Sunday) because he'll just be asleep. I'll let you know more when I send the pathology report. Chances are good that he'll be there until Thursday since nothing will happen on Wednesday, it being Independence Day.

Many of you have asked how you can help. So, here's one idea. Once he's stable and at home, he'll need to get to his radiation and/or chemo appointments. While I'm happy to take him, there may be times when I have a scheduling conflict or have had enough of hospitals for a while. But, we'll cross that bridge when we come to it.

Many thanks for all your caring. Words cannot express how we feel.

Love to you all.
Peace,
Kevin.

10 July
Greetings!

Welcome to the next installment of *The Schwartz Report*. There isn't much new to report except that Ron has been moved from ICU to a regular medical floor. Given the fact that he's less than 48 hours out of surgery, he's doing remarkably well. His long time stutter has seemed to go away and his speech has returned. However, he's still having a hard time getting his thoughts from his brain to his mouth. He's also confused quite a bit of the time so if you visit don't be surprised he calls you by another name and maybe of an other gender. He's generally in good spirits but at times it's like trying to communicate with a six year old.

While all of this sounds a BIT daunting, we have to remember that the brain is resilient and may regenerate. The suspicion is that he'll never speak like he used to but that much of his ability to verbally communicate will/may return. The pathology report won't be back until Friday or the beginning of next week.

My cousin Sue's son, Johnny, is coming up from California and should be here on Thursday. He'll be staying for several weeks before heading out for Ohio to see his folks and then on to England in August for an internship teaching. Having him around will be a godsend; not just another pair of hands but an actual family member. Plus he's rather a hoot to have around.

Visiting hours are until 8pm. He's on the 3rd floor of the East Wing of Svedish Cherry Hill, formerly Providence Hospital. Any of you priestly or licensed types are welcome to take him The Eucharist and also anoint him. I'm his husband, not his priest. Besides I'm not sure I could do it and keep myself together. I have my Communion Kit in my car so don't worry about going the the Church and raiding the Tabernacle. While flowers weren't allowed on the ICU, they are on the third floor...if you're so inclined but certainly not necessary.

I'm at home this morning and early afternoon since the house is a train wreck. And I'm presently doing laundry or else I'll have to go in the buff which would turn everyone into a Buddhist - which isn't a bad thing but they might also go blind.

Hope you're all doing well. Thanks for all your emails and texts. They mean SOOOO much. It's nice to know that in the midst of a nation quickly sinking into uncaring Fascism that people do care. Keep counting beads, lighting candles and praying to Whomever you pray. It all gets to the same inbox.

I'll keep you posted as things progress.
Much love to you all.
Peace,
Kevin.

July 11

Greetings, Y'all!

If you're getting tired of these reports, just delete them. Or maybe that's my own projection that the novelty has worn off of this venture. LOL!

Ron is speaking mostly in complete sentences and is mentally or rationally all back. As I've said before, his stutter is gone completely. He still searches for words but that should also get better. He's no longer wearing the turban and just has a big Band Aid on his head. **AND HE'S BORED OUT OF HIS MIND!**

Cousin Johnny arrived yesterday morning. It was great to see him and great to have him here. He's always upbeat and fun as opposed to my curmudgeonliness. (Why is it that most male Anglican priests are curmudgeons???? The ones in England are off the charts!) After lunch, we went up to the hospital.

Before Johnny arrived, I had a call from a doc from the Rehab Unit on the 6th floor. They are suggesting that Ron spend a few days, maybe 5 or 6, in Rehab with a speech therapist. This will also allow them to assess his balance so that getting up the front steps isn't a problem. As to driving, well, we haven't mentioned that yet. AND he gets to wear real clothes so that his bare bum isn't sticking out of that silly hospital gown...though a string of pearls might improve THAT look.

Rehab will be about 3 hours spread through out the day. I asked about visitors and visitors are more than welcome. If you do go to visit, keep in mind that his emotional filters are down but will return. So, if he welcomes you with hugs and kisses, don't be alarmed. He was supposed to go to Rehab yesterday but by 6pm they still hadn't fetched him. He had a fit when he found out he wasn't going yesterday and probably today, bounced his legs on the bed and cried. I hugged him and all that stuff because he was truly upset and I truly wanted to comfort him. However, I have to admit that it was so uncharacteristic of his personality that it was a bit amusing. So, expect an even more exuberant Ron than you're used to.

To be honest, and you all know I'm the eternal pessimist, I don't think the pathology report will find anything. My suspicion, and I have no proof of this AT ALL, is that the tumor has been growing for years. The doc said it was a product of the brain itself and not an intruder. My thought is that it has been responsible for the stutter. It may also have to do with his seeming at times to have a bit of Asperger's since, as the tumor has grown, it had pushed part of the left side of his brain to the right side. But then, remember this is a wild guess on my part, one who has absolutely **no** medical training.

Your love and support have meant the world to us both. Ron doesn't remember visits early in the week but when told about them has been **VERY** touched that people came and care. I had a text yesterday from Patty at the Varsity Inn near Gasworks Park where we have gone every Saturday for breakfast for years. Patty is the manager and one of the kindest and sweetest people on the planet. Her 85 year old mother has been praying the Rosary for Ron (and others....she has a list!) daily. So, obviously the prayers have been paying off. Please keep them going. Whatever energy transferred through the prayers seems to be working. Again, pray to Whomever you pray since it all gets to the same inbox.

So, that's the latest. Johnny and I plan on going up to the hospital @2pm. That'll give him time to get settled on the 6th floor and for them to do some initial assessments and get him acclimated. You can also call him now. - (206) 320-2000 then ask to be connected to his room. He called me yesterday so his ability to use the phone has returned. (Of course, the conversation was, "Get me the hell out of this place! When are you coming to see me." Can't say as I blame him at all.)

BTW, one question that people have been asking is about the hospital food. Apparently, it's pretty good. He's had salmon almost every day and the broccoli isn't grey. They're very generous portions too. Of course, he's now on the diabetic diet. We had that conversation yesterday. When he gets home we're both going to be eating very differently. The Pasta King/Queen will have retired!

Now that the crisis seems to have passed, I'm doing better. On Independence Day, Montezuma came with his Revenge! I think it was my bod letting go of stress. By noon, Montezuma had taken his posse and moved on to his next victim. So, I stayed home that day which didn't please

Ron at all but I didn't wanna take a chance on messing up the car. (TMI???) My plan is to take the rest of July off from work except Sundays since I find saying Mass necessary for my spiritual sanity. But the weekdays I'll be at home or going to doc appointments with Ron. So, I'll need to depend on the Clementines to keep the Parish running.....which shouldn't be a problem. You've been there, done that, got the tee shirt, the mug, the tote bag AND the umbrella. Of course, I'm available for emergencies that need a priest. And I'm sure Tom is available (though I don't want to speak for him!).

Much love to you all. And so many thanks too! Updates may be less frequent but I'll keep you all posted as I necessary.

12 July

Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the Soul and sings the tune without the words and never stops at all.

- Emily Dickenson via Judith Wilson on this email thread.

Greetings, Y'all.

Since Johnny's been here, we've been eating correctly - low carbs, etc.. I didn't take my full insulin last night and STILL woke up in the wee hours of the morning with low blood sugar. So, I had a nice carb-fest of crumpets and French jam to boost the numbers. So, now I have a sugar overhang. Feel like I've been hit by a Smart Car - not a Mack Truck.

I'm not telling you this to elicit sympathy but to illustrate our preparations for Ron's homecoming. He's doing very well at the Foss "Home" - as my cousin Sue, Johnny's mom said, shades of Shady Pines! Foss Home is faboo! It's clean and modern and doesn't smell. The staff is great and knows what they're doing. And the food, according to Ron, is quite good. So.....

The results of the Care Conference were very hopeful. Johnny served as our ears since Ron's cognition, while pretty good, is still a bit "soft" shall we say. He's 95% back but they're still working on it. And I was saying Hail Marys the whole time so I'm sure I missed a few things. But Johnny was great and got everything and asked some pretty pointed questions I wouldn't've thought of.

He finally got the doc to use the word "cancer" which Ron missed. We talked about it yesterday and he's on board. Not happy about it, but as usual he's on top of the world. So..... Seems that they got most of the tumor which was malignant but there's still some residual stuff they couldn't cut out. So, we go in Monday at 9am - MONDAY!!!! the sacred day off of the clergy who sleep until **NOON** on Mondays!!!!!! - to Oncology Radiology to plan for the radiation treatments. Radiation should get out the rest of the tumor. If not, then oral chemo will be the next step. Since it's oral, I take it that it's not necessary to be as aggressive as the IV kind. And the side effects are much less gruesome. My dear friend "P" is having the other kid at the moment. So put her on your lists too.

So, there's lots of hope. Of course, with all this hope my emotions are still very much at the surface. Some Englishman I am! Well, of course, I'm not. I am adopted. I'm some sort of southern European like a Spaniard or an Italian or a Greek who expresses his/her emotions at the drop of a hat. (I still need to do that Ancestry.com swab thing!)

Since the pathology report came back, even though there's TONS more hope than we had initially thought, I get weepy pretty easily. So, if we're together, don't get freaked out about it. At this point they're tears of relief and joy.

Ron will be home probably Saturday morning. We'll go for breakfast at the Varsity Inn as usual if he actually gets out in the morning. BTW, best diner food in town! Initially he'll not be allowed to be left alone until we see how well he can navigate the outside world especially steps. So, we may need a volunteer to hang out with him on occasion. But that's to be determined.

Physically Ron's doing quite well. Mentally he's doing better every day. Verbally, his stutter is gone as I have mentioned and his recollection of correct words is improving rapidly. Those therapists at Foss are great and are putting him through his paces. He's also kept stimulated by the entourage with whom he keeps holding court. (Every Queen needs a court!) Your visits and cards are not only wonderfully kind and generous but healing. He sits in the court yard of Foss Home with half a dozen visitors and loves every minute of it. Extroverts! They're all alike!

At this point, updates will be less frequent as life gets back to the new normal - whatever the hell that will be. Keep up the prayers as they seem to be doing whatever they do. If you're not the praying type, good vibes do the same thing. If anything weird comes along, I'll let you all know.

Father Tom has suggested I preach on Sunday which will be both good but probably a bit emotional. It'll be somewhat an update - I plan on taking the summer off to be with Ron - but also an actual sermon. The spiritual end of this whole thing has been quite remarkable. I'll also be saying the Mass.

And, again, thanks so much for your support, prayers, jokes, good humor and all that stuff. Unless you've been here, and many of you have been and are, you can't comprehend how much it means. St. Catherine of Siena used to say that God has no hands or feet or heart but ours through which to become incarnate. Jesus was a one time event at Incarnation and an example of what and who humans, not just Christians, are supposed to be. You all are proving the old girl right once again. (And as I watch the news each day, I'm reminded that God has no voice but ours too!)

Much love to you all.
Peace,
Kevin.

The rest of the story can be found at <https://theschmirtzreport.blogspot.com>