

The winning fight



BRENT SCILIZZI OF MILTON, a tennis enthusiast like his mother, is living proof that cancer can be beaten.

For anyone who is only 13, nine years ago seems like eons, but to Brent Scilizzi of Milton, it was a time which he still recalls with uncanny sharpness. It was a time of alien nights away from his parents, followed by years of tedious visits to hospital.

For Brent's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Enzo Scilizzi, 1966 was when their only son was beyond their help, when all they had to think about was their doctor's advice to "hope for the best but be prepared for the worst". It was the year their son had cancer.

"We kept up the motions of living because we had another child at home and life must go on," says Mrs. Scilizzi, "but we were living in shock. You just don't think that sort of thing can ever happen to your child."

Early detection of Brent's cancer was the result of his mother's observations. While recovering from a bout of chicken pox, she noticed he was unusually tired which she assumed was due to his illness. However, a few days later when bathing him, Mrs. Scilizzi noticed an unusual lump, a hardness over his appendix. Suspicions aroused, she took him to their family physician for a checkup.

By reporting unusual signs in Brent's health to their doctor, diagnosis and treatment of his illness began early and played

an important role in his cure. His illness was diagnosed as a Wilms' tumour, a rare form of cancer that develops in children, usually before they are six years old. Only twenty years ago, chance of surviving a Wilms' tumour was small. Today, because of research and modern treatment techniques, about 75 per cent of the patients can be cured and lead a normal, active life.

While waiting in hospital for surgery, Brent's lump became such a curiosity to young inmates that a sign had to be posted above his bed advising them to "Look But Do Not Touch".

It was no wonder that he was a medical curiosity at the age of four, because the size of the tumour the surgeons finally removed from his tiny abdomen turned out to be larger

than a grapefruit. Although his right kidney was totally destroyed by the tumour the doctors were confident that they had gotten "everything". "That was when we started to live again," Mrs. Scilizzi says, "we knew there was hope."

The following six months were decisive, if there was no further evidence of cancer it meant that Brent would probably be cured. Once a

month, Mrs. Scilizzi took him regularly to hospital for checkups.

"I was grateful for every day," says Mrs. Scilizzi, "I started to think in a positive way about Brent's future, especially when our doctor advised us not to spoil him because, 'if he makes it he will grow up to be a miserable old man.'"

Although the operation left Brent with only one kidney, which meant that he would never be able to play contact sport, it was a small price to pay for the return of good health.

Just as the six-month waiting period neared its end, their hopes were crushed with the news of Brent's all important checkup. The doctors had discovered a spot on his left lung.

For a while it seemed like everything had been in vain, that they were indeed going to lose him. But with radiation treatment and chemo-therapy the cancer was quickly destroyed. He was healthy

again. Brent still visits the Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto for checkups but now it's only once a year. In the meantime he likes to "hack" around like other boys his own age, play a tolerable game of tennis and receive scholastic awards for academic excellence at his school as he did last year.

Although far too young at the time to realize the implications of his disease, Brent does know that he has beaten cancer.

"I think that parents should have their child examined by their physician," says Mrs. Scilizzi, "at the first sign of unusual health. From our experience we know that early diagnosis and treatment does help to beat cancer."

This year the Canadian Cancer Society will conduct its April campaign across Canada to raise money to support cancer research as well as carrying out its program of service to patients and public education. The Georgetown unit is confident its \$18,000 goal for Halton Hills will be generously supported.



A CHILDHOOD TUMOUR left Brent Scilizzi with only one kidney at the age of four. Today the Milton, teenager is in good health because of early diagnosis and treatment.

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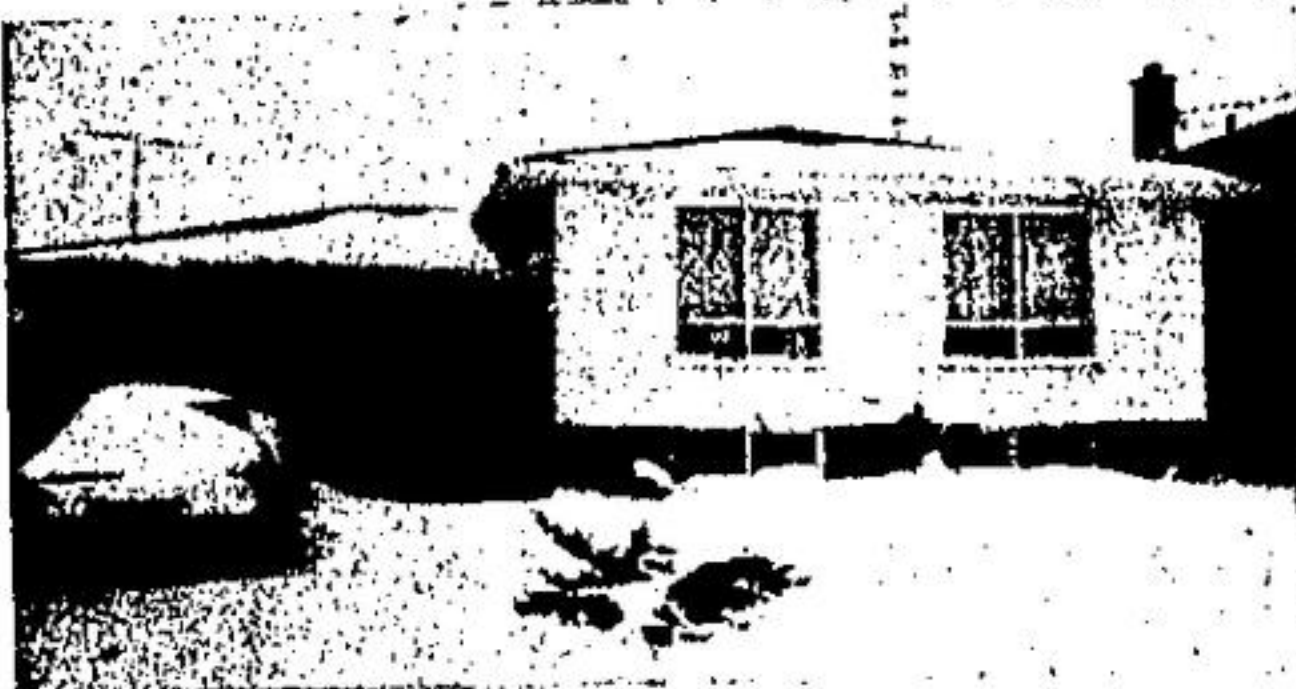


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