

Hep C: coping and curing

Book Launch

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Author Elizabeth Rains

Author Elizabeth Rains doesn't know exactly when or where she contracted hepatitis C. She only knows she is a very lucky person who has been cured of a disease that attacks the liver and can kill in its final stages.

In a new book, *Demon in My Blood* (Greystone Books) she recalls past decades of her life, searching for that fatal event that contaminated her blood. Had she received a tainted blood transfusion after the birth of her daughter, or was it from the rough sex with an infected partner back in the late 1960s? Her journey through her past – hippie wanderings around America, fleeing from her manipulative parents, the birth of her children – makes the book a riveting read told from a personal point of view.

Rains has taught university courses in writing and editing and has had her byline in many magazines and newspapers, including the West Howe Sound column for Coast Reporter. When she was first diagnosed, she had already moved to Gibsons and was in the process of retiring from her teaching job at Vancouver's Langara College. She visited the Gibsons medical clinic where she met Dr. Iris Radev, whose thorough examination revealed the proliferation of demons in her blood.

"I was so lucky," she told Coast Reporter. "I was on the edge of cirrhosis of the liver," though she had not experienced any major symptoms. She was diagnosed in just enough time to fast track her through the system as one of the first of infected people to test out a new drug. "If the hepatitis had been discovered earlier, the only treatment was interferon with its side effects. Again, I was so lucky. And I still had a medical plan from my job to help pay for the medication." The drugs she took were stratospherically expensive, although the good news is that they have since come down in price and BC's PharmaCare will now assist.

Rains' journalism skills pushed her to research hepatitis in all its forms and be proactive for a cure. She documents her journey, interviews others with the disease (including Andrew Loog Oldham, manager to the Rolling Stones), and celebrates her cure.

Those who are at risk for hepatitis were often born between 1945 and 1965, the baby boomers who have had numerous sexual partners, tainted blood transfusions or injected drugs with a used needle, even once, in their reckless past. If you have any of these risk factors, get tested for hepatitis – that's the most important message from this book, but it's not the only message. Get a good doctor who gives a thorough examination. (Sadly, Rains saviour, Dr. Radev, has left the Coast.)

Rains will launch her book at Truffles Café in Gibsons on Friday, June 16 at 7 p.m. She'll be signing books and giving away tickets to Bard on the Beach as a door prize. *Demon in My Blood* can be found at Talewind Books in Sechelt, at Chapters and on Amazon.

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