

INTERVIEWER: Could you talk about the ease . . . maybe . . . or difficulty . . . in the actual physical recovery?

PARTICIPANT: It was horrible. I remember the instant I woke up from the surgery. And the surgery was supposed to take, maybe, 3 hours . . . it ended up taking something like 6, maybe 7 hours, because they didn't expect to find the spreading. I woke up . . . and . . . well, anesthesia has an interesting effect on people. I'd seen people come out of anesthesia before, and it's funny sometimes . . . people just start bawling and talking gibberish. Naturally, I wake up and I just start wailing, crying. But I realize, first thing, that my voice is coming out much better than it had before surgery, so I thought, "Yeah, this is great!" The following weeks, I was in a lot of pain, primarily because of the nature of the surgery. For a thyroidectomy, there's a period of healing, of course, but my surgery was different because they had to go to the side of my neck where the tumor had begun to spread. As a result, I couldn't walk, could barely move. I was in bed for a good 3 weeks. I'm not the sort that can be bedridden easily. So I was miserable, and more unfortunate, I had to stay with my parents. My mother was fine . . . she doted on me a bit too much for my taste, but it was no surprise. But I could have done without my dad being there, and he was there plenty. And my condition didn't mean we didn't argue, which just complicated things with my voice. Following the surgery, there was a notable inability to speak well for about a month, when my phonation was very definitively affected. Slowly, it started coming back here and there, but something had definitely changed. I got everything checked, but no one could tell what changed. It's been theorized that the surgery was responsible for shifting some things around, so things were just going to be different from that point on. That was difficult . . . healing physically and coming to terms with the fact that things would have to be so different from then on. I wasn't even myself anymore after that. My voice was gone, so I was gone, and I'd never been anything but my voice. So, yeah, that was really hard.