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**Australian Story – Monday 13 November,
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BEHIND THE MASK – MIKE WILLESEE, PART TWO**

Introduced by Ray Martin.

The conclusion to *Australian Story's* two-part exclusive on current affairs legend Mike Willesee as he faces the fight of his life – a cancer diagnosis.

The episode begins in 1993 when Mike returned to *A Current Affair* for a year, conducting some of his most memorable interviews. He drew wide praise for an interview with opposition leader John Hewson, during which the prime ministerial hopeful tied himself in knots over a question about the GST. Many considered it the moment Hewson lost the election.

Four weeks later praise turned to condemnation when Mike interviewed two young children held captive by killers during the Cangai siege. "I think this is a classic case where we misjudged the audience reaction," admits former Nine news chief Peter Meakin.

Tiring of nightly current affairs, Mike turned his attention to a variety of business interests and documentary making. While in Kenya on his way to film in Sudan he had a premonition that the small plane he was boarding would crash. Shortly after take-off, it did.

Although Mike was unhurt, the experience had a profound impact on him and led him on a long journey back to the Catholic faith of his childhood. In the years since he has invested much of his time into trying to find scientific proof for various religious miracles.

It is Mike's strong religious faith, along with the support of his family, that has helped him since being diagnosed with cancer in October last year. "The prognosis wasn't very good," says Mike. "Six to twelve months."

He responded well to treatment but in July this year tumours began to reappear in his neck and throat. During filming for *Australian Story* he underwent radiation therapy, which saw him lose at least 10 kilograms ... and his famous voice.

Mike remains upbeat about his prospects and is looking forward to upcoming projects. "He's so resolute about beating it," says his brother Terry. "And he is a tough guy – make no mistake, Mike Willesee is a tough guy."

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