

## My Cancer Journey

I really didn't have a clue until Oct. 30, 2007 when I went for my yearly pap smear and Dr. Martha Morgan felt a mass wasn't sure if it was in the stomach or bowel. That was the beginning of our family cancer roller coaster ride. After I got the flood of tears stopped I'm thinking this is wrong my family don't die from cancer we all have heart attacks.

I loved the questions Dr. Korba ask concerning symptoms "have you been running low grade fever (not that I know of but I don't take my temperature daily) having night sweats (well I have been having a few hot flashes) no I mean wet the sheets night sweats (my sheets may have been wet a time or two but not from sweat) are you fatigued (at the time I was 64 of course I get tired) and then the best question have you lost weight (I said look at me do I look like someone that has lost weight).

Then after scans, biopsy, and bone marrow test our fears became reality. We heard you are in 4<sup>th</sup> stage low grade non Hodgkin Follicular Lymphoma treatable but not curable. After reading articles on the internet mine was probably caused from contact with chemicals and fertilizers from my work place of 25 years.

The word cancer is so devastating. The first few days after hearing it is in multiple lymph nodes, spleen and bone marrow cancer was always on my mind.

I would pray knowing the healing power of God but I just couldn't quite have the faith to leave my burden there. Then one night as I was lying in bed praying I felt a hand slip into mine. I opened my eyes to find I was the only one in the room. I cried and rejoiced at the same time knowing that God was holding my hand and would walk with me down this unknown path.

I prayed that I would not lose my sense of humor and to always keep a positive attitude.

We sing a song the words to the chorus are "Lord I can't even walk without you holding my

hand. The mountains to high and the valleys to wide. Down on my knees. I learn to stand because I can't even walk without your holding my hand."

I feel so blessed to know that God was and still is holding my hand. Not from anything I did but from what He did for me on Aug. 6, 1956 when He saved my soul.

This path didn't just affect me but also my family and friends. Don't know how I could have fought this without my husband, three children, their spouses and my five grandchildren. They are the heroes that fight just as hard if not harder than we do. My caregivers continued to love me "I think" and showed patience even on those 5 days after a chemo treatment when I was taking 170 mg prednisone a day. My husband, which I now have had for 61 years, would take my hand before test and treatments and we would say a prayer asking for God's help to get us through and we know that with God all things are possible.

I can honestly say that cancer brought our family closer together and naturally I did worked it a little to my advantage getting a few things that otherwise I wouldn't have gotten. Like my new handmade solid cherry sleigh bed. Had to wait a few years before getting the rest of the suit.

I still keep one of the many cards I received in my Bible from a friend that lost her battle with lung cancer it read "Each day is a gift from God so remember whether it's a good day or a bad day. It's always a God loves you day" then she added praying for you.

Remember no matter how bad things are in your life there is always something good you can thank God for. You can focus on your purpose or you can focus on your problems but the easiest way to get rid of pain is to get your focus off yourself and onto God and others.

I am blessed that today I am a fifteen year cancer survivor and that I have been able to reach out to others just beginning their journey.

Marie Pitts