

**CANCER AWARENESS**

SPECIAL SECTION



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in the battle  
against cancer



**DAILY JOURNAL**

OCTOBER 6, 2022

SHANNON HEIDENREICH: OVARIAN CANCER



# trusting HER BODY

Persistence helped woman through ovarian cancer

The tumor had grown to the size of a loaf of bread, silently expanding.

Shannon Heidenreich had no indication the mass, and other smaller tumors, had populated her ovaries and filled her abdomen. She felt fine, ready to start a new school year teaching.

In a matter of weeks, her situation had deteriorated — a lingering cough led to increased pain in her stomach. Even as doctors told her it didn't seem to be anything, she felt something was very wrong.

"I knew something was different. I felt different. My stomach felt like I was six months pregnant," the New Palestine resident said.

**STORY  
AND  
PHOTO  
BY  
RYAN  
TRARES**

Her instinct was right. Heidenreich, 52, ended up seeing a doctor, who found tumors on her ovaries and throughout her body. She was diagnosed with Stage 3-C ovarian cancer, going through surgery to remove the oversized masses before enduring chemotherapy.

Three years removed from her diagnosis, she has remained cancer free. But the experience helped shape her perspective in an entirely new way.

"Ovarian (cancer) is just tricky. They call it the silent killer, because you ignore the symptoms of it. People need to trust their body, and not be afraid to go into the doctor if

things feel weird," she said.

In August of 2019, Heidenreich was starting her 26th year of teaching. She was a first-grade teacher at Lowell Elementary School in Warren Township, and after what felt like a great and productive summer, she was ready for a good school year.

But soon after classes started, she developed a cough.

"I attributed it to allergies, and kind of ignored it," she said. "But towards the end of August, my stomach started to feel bloated, I had a little bit of pain in my stomach and my cough became more consistent at night."

Heidenreich waited a few more weeks to see if the symptoms would clear up, and when they didn't, made an appointment with her primary care doctor. Her doctor didn't find any obvious cause for her pain, suggesting that perhaps she pulled a muscle during a coughing fit.

Still, Heidenreich wasn't convinced. Bothered by that sense, she decided a few days later to go to the emergency department after school. She had blood work and tests done trying to pinpoint what was causing her pain.

A CT scan painted a bleak picture — tumors were covering her ovaries and throughout her abdomen.

"That's kind of the typical presentation with ovarian cancer: a lot of times people are complaining of bloating and cramping and just

## The Heidenreich File

**Name:** Shannon Heidenreich

**Age:** 52

**Diagnosis:** Stage 3-C ovarian cancer

**Treatment:** Debulking surgery to remove tumors, six rounds of chemotherapy, two years of PARP inhibitor

**What has cancer taught you?**

"You have to be present. You have to live in the moment. You have to focus on the right now. It sounds very cliché, but it's so true."

**How has cancer changed you?**

"I heard someone say, that when you get close to that curtain, where on the other side is death and you're that close, it forces you to look back at life and say, 'I have it so good. Why did I complain about that crap?' I think that's what cancer does. No one knows how long we have; only God knows. But when you're forced to look back, you can say that you can do it, you can be happy right now."

**What would you tell someone just diagnosed?**

"It's doable. It's not fun, and everyone is different. But I learned that you are strong when you have to be. That helped me a lot."

(SEE PERSISTENCE PAGE E3)

“ Being with my family was important. I trusted in God and what he was leading me towards. But it was very hard to leave teaching before I was ready. ”

SHANNON HEIDENREICH

## PERSISTENCE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE E2

feeling crummy, thinking maybe they're just getting older or just gaining weight. Then it gets to the CT scan, and there's all of this disease or fluid," said Dr. James Cripe, a gynecologic oncologist at Community Health. "That's exactly what happened to Shannon."

"My husband met me there, and we were just waiting and talking. We really didn't think it would be anything serious," she said. "So it was a huge shock."

Heidenreich was admitted to Community Health East that night, not even going home first to get clothing or pack a bag.

"So in one evening, everything changed," she said.

For days, she stayed in the hospital, working with the nurses and her medical team. They discussed the best course of treatment: surgery, followed by chemotherapy.

She was also introduced to Cripe, who had been hired at Community a few weeks before he was assigned to Heidenreich's care — a move that seems serendipitous now.

"To me, I'm a very faithful person, and I just believe that God puts people in the right place at the right time. I felt

fortunate that he was hired," she said.

Because of her age and the distribution of the disease, Cripe felt that she could tolerate a larger surgery. He wanted to get that scheduled in the coming weeks, to prevent her from being readmitted.

Heidenreich went through surgery to remove the tumors on Sept. 17, 2019 at what is now known as Community MD Anderson Cancer Center-South. The procedure would be done in stages; the first would be a "debulking" surgery, where Cripe would take out as much of the cancerous tissues as he could.

The surgery was successful — Cripe was able to remove tumors from throughout Heidenreich's abdomen, as well as removing her spleen, appendix, ovaries and other organs.

"She had a great surgery — no residual disease at the end of the procedure," Cripe said.

After surgery, the cancer was determined to be Stage 3-C ovarian cancer, meaning the disease had spread to the lining of her abdomen.

From the start, Heidenreich had the support of her own family — husband Bob, and sons Joey, 23, and Jakob, 20 — as well as her fellow teachers.

"My school family was

all waiting around. When they heard we were able to do surgery, they were all excited," she said. "Your family is not just your family, but your work family. I'd been there 26 years. Elementary schools are just tight."

But the staff at Community MD Anderson Cancer Center-South provided such empathy and care throughout the process as well, Heidenreich said.

"Everyone was there at the right time to say the right thing," she said. "When you're in a bad shape and you're humbled, you can't even wash your hair. The nurses were so awesome. I think it's those things that are very important to any person recovering from a surgery."

"It's humbling."

Heidenreich stayed in the hospital for six days, then was released for a long recovery. Because so much of her abdomen was healing, she was unable to do even simple actions: bending over to pick something up, getting up from a chair, washing herself.

"My husband was my hero. He did everything. He took care of me," she said.

In October, Heidenreich started her chemotherapy. She received six rounds every three weeks of a

combination of the drugs taxol and carboplatin — both of which have proven to be effective against ovarian cancers.

"I remember the first time I went in, I was so nervous — I was sick to my stomach before I even went in," she said. "But I think it's normal to be nervous. Once it started, it was doable. It wasn't fun; I was nauseous, but it was doable."

Because of her age, and her lack of family history with cancer, Heidenreich opted for genetic testing to see what additional risk she might have. The tests revealed the presence of the BRCA-1 mutation, which has shown to lead to increased risks of several cancers, most notably breast and ovarian cancer.

"It's important that they knew about it because it can affect her screenings in the future, and other family members or relatives to get tested. If they have it, it would impact their screenings as well," said Dr. Anuj Agarwala, medical oncologist for Community Health.

Due to the presence of BRCA-1 gene, Heidenreich has opted to do a mammogram and MRI every six months to screen for breast cancer. The test results also prompted other family members to have the genetic testing done,

and Heidenreich's sister, two nieces and two sons all tested positive for the gene.

Though important for them all to know, the results were a blow to Heidenreich.

"I think it made me more sad that they had it," she said.

After finishing chemotherapy in January of 2020, and with scans showing that the cancer had been cleared, Heidenreich started the next phase of her treatment. She started on a PARP inhibitor, a substance that blocks the enzyme that helps cells repair DNA. By blocking it, the treatment may help keep cancer cells from repairing their damaged DNA, causing them to die and delaying the recurrence of ovarian cancer.

For two years, Heidenreich took the treatment. She struggled; the PARP inhibitor chews up red blood cells, which required her to have four different blood transfusions.

"It was definitely a struggle. She was very motivated, wanted to do whatever she could to get through those two years," Agarwala said.

In March of this year, Heidenreich finished her two years on the inhibitor. The treatment seemed to be work, Agarwala said.

"Three years from her diagnosis, she shows no

signs or symptoms of recurrence," he said.

Heidenreich has focused her energy on relaxing and being present. She has devoted more time to family and friends, as well as simply trying to appreciate the small things in life. In December 2020, she decided to retire from teaching.

"It was a hard decision, very hard. But I also felt that, if my time is limited, I want to spend it the best way possible," she said. "Being with my family was important. I trusted in God and what he was leading me towards. But it was very hard to leave teaching before I was ready."

She realizes her cancer journey is ongoing; she will be on it most likely for the rest of her life. She compares it to being chased by a mountain lion. When she was going through surgery and then chemotherapy, that's when the lion was nipping at her heels.

But then she finished treatment — the mountain lion faded away.

"But you still knowing that the mountain lion is there," she said. "I think that's what cancer is. You still think, any time it could come back. Every time I go for a blood work or scans, it could be back."

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# NEVER *alone*



## Camp offers children of caregivers affected by cancer a sense of community

In the woods of rural Brown County, a summer camp offers the children of caregivers with cancer the chance to have fun and fully experience their childhood.

Camp Kesem is a week-long, sleep-away summer camp where the children of parents and caregivers with cancer have the chance to have fun and build connections with each other and counselors who understand their needs. There are an estimated five million children who are coping with a parent's cancer diagnosis in the U.S., according to Kesem.org.

The camp is the flagship program of Kesem — a leading national nonprofit that supports children affected by a parent's cancer — and is put on by volunteers from the organization's more than 130 university and college chapters.

**STORY BY**  
NOAH  
CRENSHAW  
**PHOTOS**  
SUBMITTED

There are chapters at some of Indiana's largest universities: Ball State University, Indiana State University, Indiana University and the University of Notre Dame. Each of the chapters is responsible for putting on their own camp each year, though the camps do not take place on the college campus, said Kylie Fulton, a member of the Kesem at Indiana University board and former camper.

This year's Kesem at Indiana University camp took place at Happy Hollow Children's Camp south of Nashville in Brown County. Children were able to take part in the camp for free, said Carina Antonini, one of the directors of Kesem at Indiana University.

The free attendance was funded in part by the fundraisers Kesem does.

Kesem at Indiana University fundraises year-round for the summer camp. Chapter members do this through different events throughout the year, such as a Make the Magic fundraising gala and Giving Tuesday, Antonini said.

If there is extra money leftover after the fundraisers, then the money gets sent to the national office to be distributed to other chapters in need, Fulton said.



### From camper to counselor

Fulton, of Greenwood, first attended the camp when she was a freshman in high school, in 2016. Her mother, Jackie, is a thyroid cancer survivor, and when her mother found out about the camp, she asked Fulton if she wanted to attend.

She said yes, and loved the experience. "It really helped me find a second family," Fulton said. "A lot of people will describe it as being a second family, and it was such a good experience because everyone was in the same boat. We were all just trying to have fun and just make the most of that week."

After her freshman year, Fulton attended the camp three more times as a camper. During her senior year though, in 2020, camp was virtual due to the coronavirus pandemic, she said.

When Fulton was deciding on which college to attend, she kept in mind which colleges had a Kesem chapter. Once she found out IU had a chapter, she chose to attend IU and later joined the campus' chapter.

For Fulton, going from camper to counselor was a major change. Being in charge of all of the kids and making sure they have fun can be mentally taxing at times, she said.

"It can be kind of mentally taxing to be surrounded by a lot of different things," Fulton said. "Sometimes a kid will come up to you and tell you something because they trust you and it's something it can be kind of intense."

Being a counselor and being part of the camp is worth it though, Fulton said.

"It was such a good experience being a counselor because I knew that my camping days were over, so it wasn't like I was still trying to be a camper," Fulton said. "I was fine with my position of being there to give these kids the best time that they have."

It's been very rewarding for Fulton to see herself grow into the position of counselor, she said.

"Now I'm one of the people that I looked up to," she said. "I made really close relationships with some of my counselors because it was a second family and I'm still in touch with a couple of them. ... I recognized that and I was like able to then transfer that into me being a counselor and to being a good role model for them."

### What the camp entails

The camp takes place during the summer months during two, one week sessions. At the start, each camper is given a camp

(SEE **CAMP** PAGE E5)

**Pictured:** Campers and counselors come together in a circle during an activity on the first day of the second session of the Camp Kesem IU chapter's summer camp on Aug. 1 in Nashville. // Campers move around during an activity on the first day of the second session of the Camp Kesem.

**CAMP**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE E4

name, along with counselors. Fulton's camp name is Patagonia, and Antonini's is Astrid, for example.

Each day of the camp is themed, and usually follows a general schedule of activities. First, campers will get together for breakfast and a morning activity, such as arts and crafts or going to a lake, before going to lunch. After lunch, there is a break for kids to relax or take a nap, Fulton said.

Later in the day, the campers come together for some of the bigger activities, like shooting off bottle rockets and rock climbing. Sometimes campers rotate through the various activities, she said.

After this, campers go to dinner and then take part in a song circle where campers will sing songs together. Near the end of one of this year's sessions, one of the counselors, who is a local musician, played a song for the campers during Camp Dance.

"He was more than happy to just whip out his guitar and just start playing," Fulton said.

Some days have more specific activities in mind. On Wednesdays, everyone gets into groups and pass a jar around as a talking stick. The jar, filled with lights and "Kesem magic," is used to give campers the opportunity to tell a personal story if they wanted, Fulton said.

"We started off with having one of our counselors tell a really touching story about themselves," Fulton said. "So then we pass down the line and everyone can talk as much or as little as they want. When it goes back around the circle, we send it around one more time so that anyone who didn't get the chance to speak can if they want to after seeing everyone else."

After this, counselors will usually do something really fun with the campers to lighten up their spirits as this activity can often be really emotional, she said.



Camp Kesem counselors welcome campers during the first day of the second session of the Camp Kesem IU chapter's summer camp on Aug. 1 in Nashville.

Other activities include Messy Olympics, which takes place at the end of the sessions. During the activity, campers get a bunch of paint and come at counselors with it, creating a big mess.

"It's so much fun and wonderful," said Abby Lourdraj, one of the directors of Kesem at Indiana University. Lourdraj's camp name is Birdie.

**Camp provides support system**

The camp is a great experience for children who need a support system. Nobody is there to judge the children, Fulton said.

"Nobody's there to say this or that. There's no ulterior motives besides just having a good week at camp," she said.

The camp is meant more for younger kids to help them understand what's happening and to be slowly introduced to what is going on with their parent or caregiver's cancer journey. Counselors do not explain to children outright what cancer is, but make themselves available as resource if questions do come up.

"We're here to try and answer them as best we can because, of course, none of us are medical experts," Fulton said. "We're not going to go and give

this whole long speech of being like, 'This is what's happening to your parents,' because that's not our place. We're just there to give these kids a great experience."

In some cases, some of the campers are children who had a parent or guardian pass away from cancer. For example, if a camper is a teen who has a younger sibling, they may have had to step into a parent role. The camp is an opportunity for them to have a break from that, Fulton said.

"It's also an opportunity to just give them a chance to be a kid again; to just not have to worry about taking care of their sibling; to not worry about like cooking or making sure that their sibling's OK," she said. "They get to focus on themselves and then have fun."

**Involvement leads to memories**

Lourdraj, of Evansville, said she was first drawn to Kesem because of the different environment, compared to other college clubs, and because of the camp's mission to help the kids.

Antonini, of Carmel, first became involved with Kesem her freshman year. Prior to joining the IU chapter, she had never

heard of Kesem before.

"But I immediately knew it was something that I wanted to be involved in because I've always loved working with kids," she said.

In Antonini's eyes, the children Kesem serves are often overlooked, as people often think more about the parents who are going through cancer than their children. The camp provides an opportunity for those kids to be noticed and have a fun time, she said.

Activities like Messy Olympics give kids the opportunity to have fun, and for Lourdraj this activity is one of her favorite parts of camp. After taking part in one of the activity during one of the sessions, she hosed herself down to get the paint out of her hair and laid on the pavement. That's when she had a realization.

"We were just all laying on the pavement and it was warm and wonderful. Since I helped plan camp this past year, it was like all of my hard work and everything was finally coming to fruition," she said. "I was able to bask in that end of the week, kind of, relief, and knowing that all of our kids are leaving happy and they're all like getting cleaned and going to eat and it's gonna be a good time."

One of Antonini's favorite moments was seeing the kids show up for the first in-person camp Kesem at Indiana University in two years, since the pandemic in 2020.

"I was just so excited to see all the campers arriving that I had only been able to meet through online camp and just welcome them back to camp," Antonini said. "It was just super exciting and everyone is really excited and you just feel the 'Kesem magic' in the air."

**Goal is for kid to not be alone**

One of the most important priorities of the camp is the support the counselors give campers. While many children have families that are incredibly supportive, they may not have peers that understand what it's like to have a parent or guardian with cancer, Fulton said.

What the camp provides are friends who understand, and people the children can talk to, she said.

"Probably the best thing that I've seen is middle schoolers not having anyone to talk to because they literally think that they're the only ones experiencing it, come to camp and there's like 20 other kids who are in the same boat or very similar boat," Fulton said. "They finally have someone to talk to; they finally have someone who relates to them. They don't feel alone. They never want to leave camp."

Another important note about the camp is that children's parents do not have to actively have cancer to be able to go. Children of cancer survivors are welcome as well, Fulton said.

In Antonini's eyes, knowing that the camp exists is important for people to know.

"It's just a lot of people don't even know that it exists," she said. "They don't know that support is out there for their kids while they're going through cancer. Our main goal is we just don't want any child to have to go through a parent's cancer alone."

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JOE EIB: LARYNGEAL CANCER



# SURVIVOR

## *speaks out*

after cancer almost took his voice

Cancer took his wife, his family members, and almost took his voice, but it couldn't take away his will to live.

Joe Eib, now 77, was 58 years old when he had laryngeal cancer the first time, despite doctors not initially diagnosing him with it.

"I was losing my voice, my doctor said there were growths on my vocal cords. They scraped them off. That was in 2003 and they didn't think it was cancer at the time, but he said 'it'll come back in probably five years if it's cancer,'" Eib said. "It came back in 2008 and I went to Lutheran Hospital and (the doctor) said we got two choices. Don't do anything and you're going to die, but removing your vocal cords gives you a 50/50 chance."

He came out on the better side of the 50/50 chance. Even though the battle with cancer was brief, the recovery itself wasn't easy.

"I went through the surgery and that was a major thing because they slit my throat. They opened all that up and I couldn't speak for a good 2 1/2 months it took to heal. They put the prosthesis in and all I had was a hole with a tube while I was healing," Eib said. "They slit you open and they put 40 staples in, 20 on each side and you're fed with a tube all the time during recovery. Before they discharged me and got all the

staples out, they had a tube in. I was having steak and eggs as a liquid out of a can. You've gotta be mentally confident that you're not going to let this beat you; that's a lot of it."

Eib now speaks with a prosthesis in his esophagus. In order to speak, he presses his thumb against the hole at the bottom of his throat. When he drinks, he can't take any big gulps, and when he eats, he chews his food to bits as small as he can to avoid choking. Despite the difficulties, he's happy to be alive. At 77, Eib said he still plans to live for several years, and when he passes by workers at Otterbein Senior Living in Franklin, where he now lives, he makes jovial conversation.

Eib's family has been ravaged by cancer. The disease took his wife in 2018. One of his brothers also died of cancer, as did his brother's wife. Both of Eib's parents, and all three of his brothers had cancer at some point in their lives. Even when Eib himself got cancer, he wouldn't let fear or negativity consume him.

"I always tried to stay positive for them when they were sick and had cancer. You just have to do what you do and pray everything will be fine," Eib said. "The biggest thing I tried to do was stay positive. You need to get rid of everything that's negative. The day

I got this (prosthesis), I was active in the Legion and we stopped to see some friends, and my friends were just happy I could talk. A lady there heard me talk and said 'you sound spooky and not normal.' I meet people, they think that and you can tell with their body actions. I just avoid those. Other friends treat me like I'm Joe. I don't let being the way I am get me down, because I'm still alive."

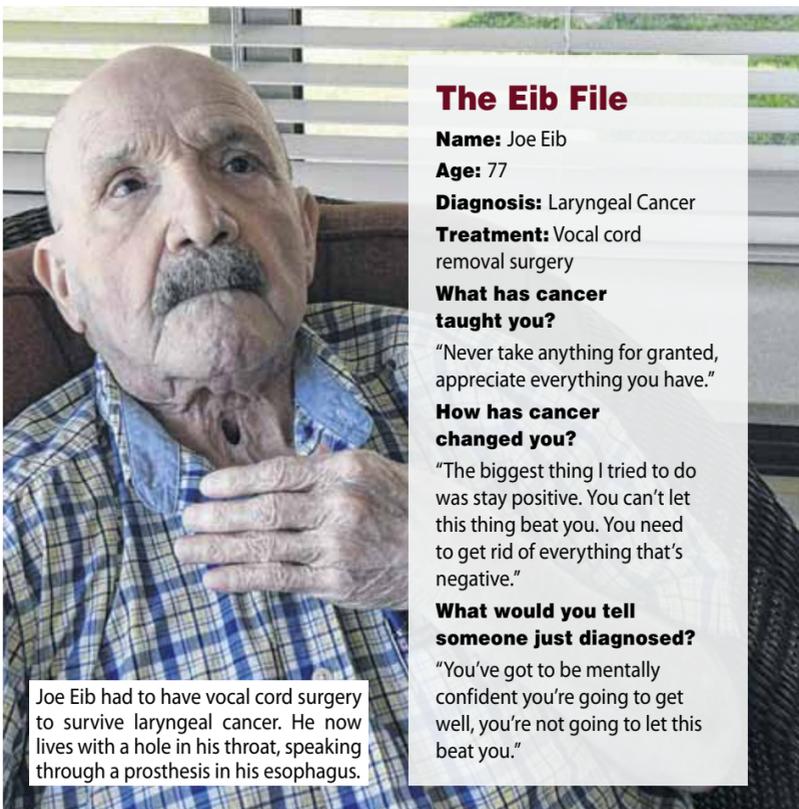
Although Eib has overcome cancer twice and has numerous physical challenges he has to work with to get through each day, he just wants to be treated like everyone else.

"Cancer people are not different than anyone else, they just have a disease," he said. "They just need psychological and family support you can give them. Your family is not a doctor but they give you that emotional support. They take you to doctor's appointments. They pick up groceries for you."

Since surviving cancer, Eib said he's learned to appreciate life every day.

"Never take anything for granted," he said. "Appreciate everything you have and all the love that your family has given you."

STORY  
AND  
PHOTOS  
BY  
ANDY  
BELL-BALTACI



### The Eib File

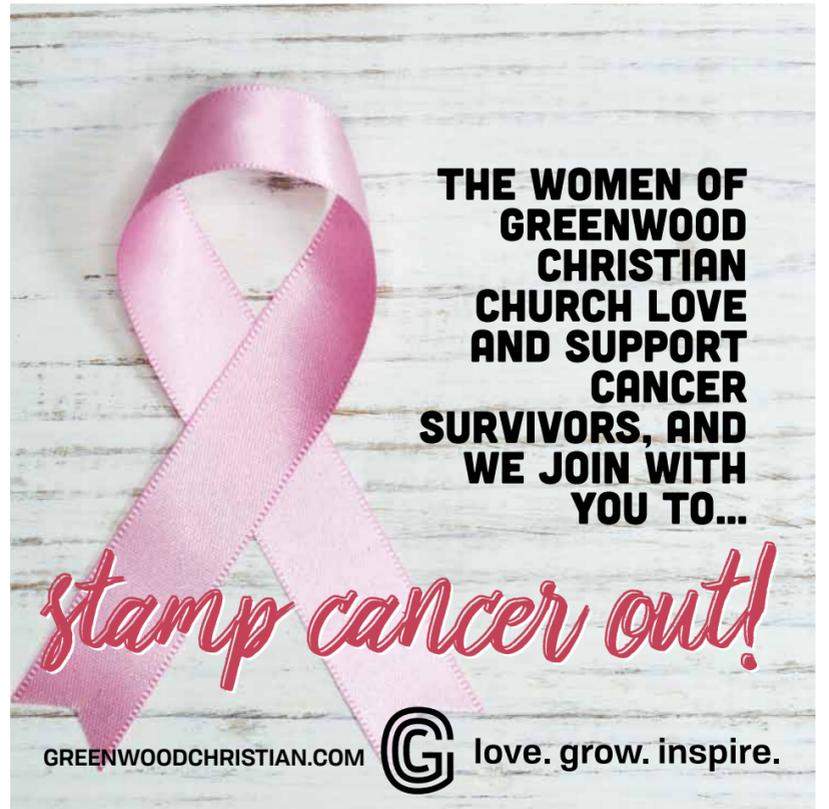
**Name:** Joe Eib  
**Age:** 77  
**Diagnosis:** Laryngeal Cancer  
**Treatment:** Vocal cord removal surgery

**What has cancer taught you?**  
"Never take anything for granted, appreciate everything you have."

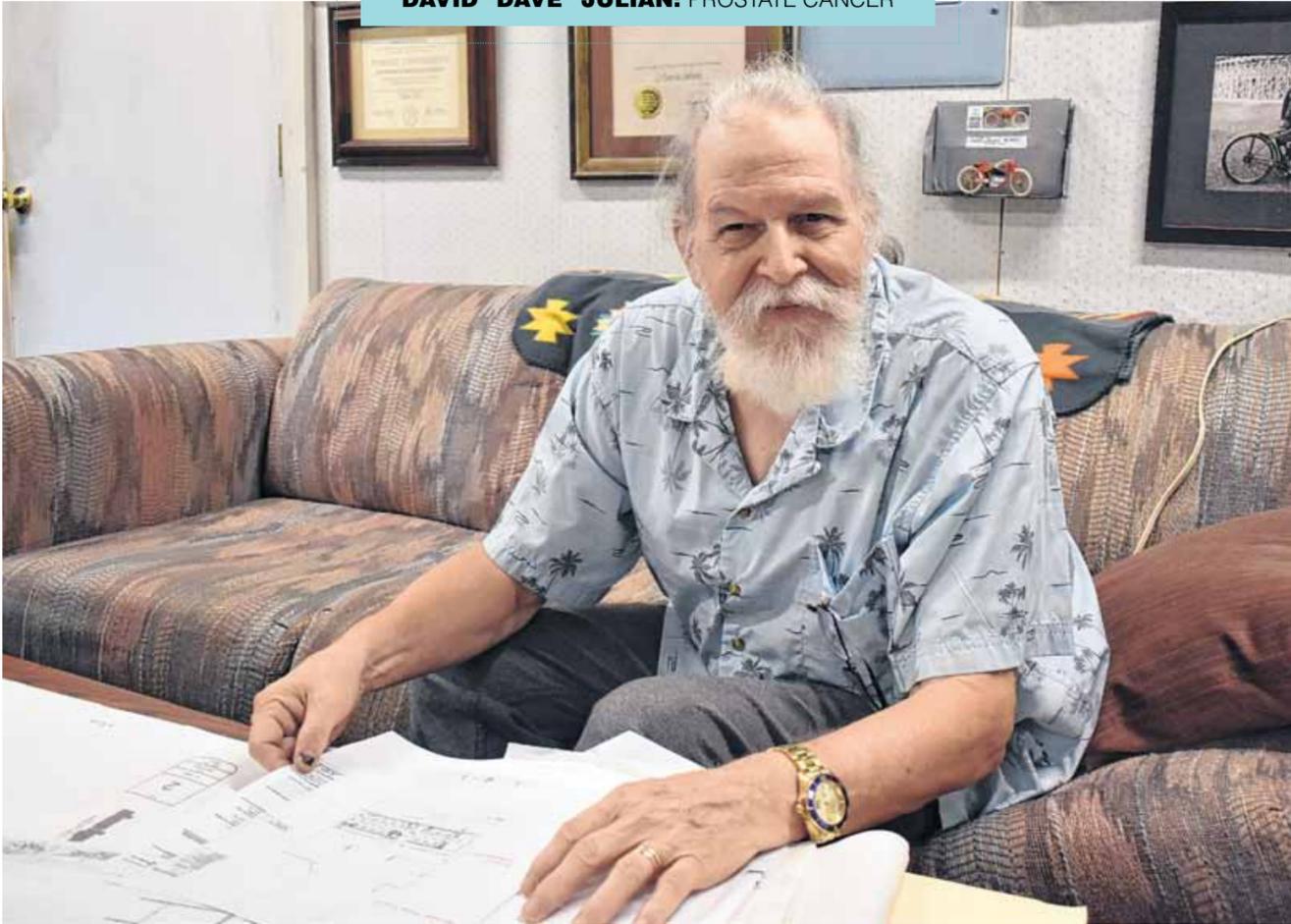
**How has cancer changed you?**  
"The biggest thing I tried to do was stay positive. You can't let this thing beat you. You need to get rid of everything that's negative."

**What would you tell someone just diagnosed?**  
"You've got to be mentally confident you're going to get well, you're not going to let this beat you."

Joe Eib had to have vocal cord surgery to survive laryngeal cancer. He now lives with a hole in his throat, speaking through a prosthesis in his esophagus.



DAVID "DAVE" JULIAN: PROSTATE CANCER



# 'IT SCARES YOU'

## Greenwood man's surgery check-up uncovers cancer

He had thought the worst was over.

David "Dave" Julian had undergone quadruple bypass heart surgery three years ago, and since then he has been undergoing regular checkups, including a blood test. Earlier this year, his regular doctor recommended he see a urologist, so he did. That's when his urologist at the Urology of Indiana office in Greenwood said he saw something unusual.

The 73-year-old Greenwood architect then underwent a biopsy. Doctors extracted samples of prostate and sent them off for analysis. When the results came back, his urologist had unexpected news: some of the cells were showing signs of cancer.

Dave Julian already had a feeling the news was not good from the second he discovered his doctor himself had called him.

"It scares you when ... the doctor himself calls you, you think 'Oh no. What's the news,'" Dave Julian said. "He said, 'Well, we've got good news and bad news. Bad news is your tests are showing you definitely have cancer cells trying to grow in your prostate. But the good news is we can handle that and you've got a good chance of surviving and we want you to come in.'"

The doctor told Dave Julian that he was fortunate that they were able to catch the cancer this soon, as it significantly improved his odds of survival. If he went forward with treatment, there was

a 96% chance that the cancer could be eradicated.

"I'm not normally a gambling man, but I thought, '96%? Sounds like pretty good odds,'" Dave Julian said.

He immediately told the doctor that he wanted to proceed with treatment. Dave Julian was initially scared about the treatment as he had heard from other people who had cancer about their experiences with chemotherapy. However, his doctor said that because they caught it soon enough, he would not need a treatment that aggressive.

"I had all these horror stories from all my relatives and I thought 'Oh my God, how much longer am I gonna live,' and all this stuff," Dave Julian said.

Dave Julian's wife, Deborah, had suspected that he might have cancer prior to the biopsy. She was relieved when he went in for a biopsy.

"I fully expected it to be positive for cancer because of the previous labs and things that doctors had said just made me feel that it's going to be so I was sort of braced for it," Deborah Julian said. "When he told me I have to talk to them when he got the results and told me it was a kind of confirmation for me."

Deborah Julian was relieved that her husband didn't have to go through surgery to treat the cancer. Radiation treatment was not only the least invasive option, but

it was the easiest and the smoothest, she said.

She felt optimistic about the treatment especially after hearing what the doctors said.

"I just felt pretty confident that it was going to be fine," she said. "You just have to hold on to that it's going to be okay and everything will be alright and we've caught it in time and everything will be all right."

Dave Julian began radiation therapy in late May, around the Indianapolis 500. Based on his relative's experiences with cancer, he says the treatment was easier than he thought it would be.

"It was serious, but barely because so much research had been done, prior to me coming along, that a lot of people knew what the heck they were doing."

Dave Julian's experience is not universal though, and he considers himself lucky. After the first few treatments, many cancer patients report having side effects, sometimes bad, from the treatment. Dave Julian did not.

"I was very fortunate that a lot of the

(SEE CHECK-UP PAGE E10)

STORY  
AND  
PHOTO  
BY  
NOAH  
CRENSHAW

### The Julian File

**Name:** David "Dave" Julian

**Age:** 73

**Diagnosis:** Prostate cancer

**Treatment:** Radiation therapy

**What has cancer taught you?**

"It's taught me to be grateful for what I have and to be grateful for the people around me, to be grateful for all the doctors and nurses and technicians that show saw that they could help people like me survive instead of not surviving. I'm much more appreciative. I always that I was but ... I was hardly ever sick or anything like that so I really didn't have any up close and personal relationships with any doctors or anybody like that until I have my heart surgery and the cancer. Then you see how serious they are about taking care of me, that's kind of cool. ... I can't praise them enough."

**How has cancer changed you?**

"I was always daring. I had motorcycles when I was younger; I was a rollerskating

guard, the cancer kind of reinforced my attitude. When I had heart problems, I kept thinking 'Okay, if I get through this, I can get through anything.' ... I survived quadruple heart surgery and I'm coming out of it in better shape than what I was when I went in and now I got cancer. Well, now I have a problem. So I had cancer, but I beat it. For now, I beat it. ... I'm blessed for what I have been through and accomplished, and learned to not press my luck. I guess it's my job for my wife because she doesn't mind telling me to slow down, don't do that."

**What would you tell someone just diagnosed?**

"I didn't need somebody, but there are support groups. There were people that were freaked out even more than I was, and there are support groups. ... They have people that have done through that process that, if they feel like it, they have support groups for people who are just finding out that they've got to go through cancer treatments."



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DANA WHITMAN: BREAST CANCER



# immediate CARE

## Woman credits quick response with catching cancer early

That the tiny tumor was even found was a miracle.

Dana Whitman had not been overly vigilant about breast cancer in the past. The disease wasn't prevalent in her family, and the 45-year-old Beech Grove resident had never suffered any cancer scares in the past.

But when she felt a lump on her breast earlier this year, she knew.

"I lost it. I was at work, and I said, 'I've got to go,'" she said.

Whitman was able to get an appointment for a mammogram at Community MD Anderson Cancer Center-South just days later, where her doctor confirmed that she had Stage 1 breast cancer.

The terrifying diagnosis was tempered by medical staff — they had caught the cancer in its earliest stages, and it would be curable.

Now in the midst of treatment, she is determined to clear this obstacle and come out stronger on the other side.

"Cancer's just not going to get me down. I'm still living my life," she said.

Whitman felt the lump on her breast on May 2 — a mass that felt like a rock, that she could almost see. She called Community MD Anderson Cancer Center South, who was able to see her the following morning. The mass in her breast was so small, she was told that it likely would not have even shown up even if she had a mammogram at her checkup the previous year.

After a biopsy, doctors confirmed that it was cancer.

"I had some aunts who had breast cancer, but they were all in their '60s and '70s when they were diagnosed. Nobody else had

dealt with it," she said. "The word 'cancer' is scary, and I'm the youngest in my family and no one has dealt with any of this."

Such a diagnosis was initially shattering, Whitman said. But her medical team, led by medical oncologist Dr. Mary Louise Mayer, worked to put her fears at ease.

The cancer was treatable, and 100% curable, they said. She would have to go through chemotherapy, and a lumpectomy in mid-September to remove the cancerous tissue from her breast.

Even put at ease, those first days after diagnosis were an avalanche of information, terms and options.

"They throw so much information at you," she said.

As Whitman was about to start chemotherapy, she was asked if she wanted to take part in a clinical trial. The trial consisted of 12 weeks of chemotherapy, once each week. Then every three weeks, she was administered immunotherapy drip infusions, which will continue until next June.

The chemotherapy never made her sick, though she did experience severe exhaustion two days after the treatment, Whitman said.

"Other than that, I was running around, feeling pretty good," she said.

Throughout the process, Whitman received assistance from Community through their Oncology Patient Assistance Fund, which provides gift cards for groceries, gas and medication to cancer patients in financial need. She is a single mother, having shared custody with her two daughters, ages 17 and 14. Though she was able to work, the onslaught of appointments and treatments still required her to take a considerable amount of time off.

(SEE EARLY PAGE E10)

### The Whitman File

**Name:** Dana Whitman

**Age:** 45

**Diagnosis:** Stage 1 breast cancer

**Treatment:** Lumpectomy, chemotherapy and immunotherapy

**What has cancer taught you?**

"Cancer's just not going to get me down. I'm still living my life."

**How has cancer changed you?**

"I've become more patient. I didn't really have patience. And I'm learning to be OK by myself."

**What would you say to someone with cancer?**

"Listen to your doctors. Do exactly what your doctors say. People tell me, 'You have a choice,' I'm just doing what they tell me to do. They're the specialists, not me. I don't know. This is all new to me."

STORY  
AND  
PHOTO  
BY  
RYAN  
TRARES

**RICH TRIVETT: MELANOMA**



# ‘RUDE awakening’

Man survives short but stressful bout with skin cancer

The questions tumbled through his brain like a whirlwind: How bad is it? How far has it spread? How long does he have to live?

Rich Trivett didn't expect it to happen to him; no one really does. He had been at his annual dermatologist check-up at the end of July, expecting it to go as usual. But there was a mole on the back of his arm that caused some concern, and his doctor wanted to look at it further.

About a week later, he got the call. He had melanoma.

Trivett didn't know much about melanoma other than that it is a type of skin cancer.

"It's melanoma, but you don't know. I don't know much about it," Trivett said. "So, I start to look and start to search and I start finding out some things I don't really want to hear."

He worried about the severity of the cancer. He read it could get deep into the skin, in the lymph nodes, and at that point he'd only have months to live.

Then he started thinking about his family — his wife, Jayne, and two adult sons. How would they take it?

His initial instinct was to shield Jayne, asking that she not go with him to his first pre-operation appointment. Trivett was scheduled to see Dr. Erika Ragar, a melanoma specialist, at Franciscan Health Indianapolis shortly after receiving his diagnosis.

But he feared there would be bad news.

"I worried if Dr. Ragar had felt something abnormal and really not felt good about the prognosis, I'm afraid that Jayne would have lost it," Trivett said.

His wife insisted on going though, no matter the outcome.

"She was determined. She said we're in this together," he said.

Leading up to that initial pre-operation appointment, Trivett suffered through sleepless nights. He kept going over everything in his mind, wondering how to tell his sons, planning out his final goodbyes, if the prognosis was bad.

"Those things are all going through your head because you really don't know," he said.

Finally, after what seemed like ages, he had his appointment on Aug. 12 to learn about the severity of the melanoma.

Despite his worst fears, Rager had good news for him. She believed the cancer was only in the first layer of the skin, meaning it could be removed, hopefully with one procedure.

Trivett could breathe a small sigh of relief.

"I felt like I got some really good news there," he said.

Up to that point, Trivett had decided not to tell his sons about the diagnosis. One of his sons were getting married in September, and he didn't want to dampen the occasion, he said.

But, after he and Jayne learned the

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY EMILY KETTERER**

(SEE AWAKENING PAGE E10)

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## CHECK-UP

CONTINUED FROM PAGE E7

bad side effects never occurred," he said. Some of the side effects he did experience were heartburn and hot flashes. He often found himself wondering why it got hot very quickly. "They weren't bad hot flashes, they were just darned inconvenient because I'd be in the grocery store saying 'Is there a fan somewhere?'" he said. "... But I thought, 'Hey if I have to have hot flashes to beat cancer, I'll do that. That's fine.'"

Throughout his experience, there were two things that were some of the hardest parts of the experience. One was the exam that required the cell extraction, the other was retraining his body for his treatment, Dave Julian said.

"Boy that first week, trying to get all that arranged, it was interesting," he said. "But once I went through all of the treatments and everything ... it was second nature."

For his wife, one of the most challenging parts of watching her husband undergo treatment was adjusting their schedules. The Julians, who describe themselves as creatures of habits, had to adhere to a stricter schedule for his treatments.

"We had to have a real strict schedule to do what we needed to do for his treatment," Deborah Julian said.

One of the best days of his life came when he was able to ring a bell in his doctor's office in mid-July. Ringing the bell signifies someone's had successful treatment for their cancer, he said.

"That's a high point because when you get to ring the bell, that means your treatment's over," Dave Julian said.

Dave Julian is incredibly thankful for his doctors and how they treated him. They worked to build him up and make sure he would not give up. Though, he said, that was never a concern.

"They told me sometimes, around about the third week, people are just starting to get ready to say 'Hey, check it.' They don't want to put up with it anymore," he said. "So those people are really good at inspiring you to say 'Hey, you made it this far. We've

only got a week to go,' or 'You've only got three days to go.'"

Deborah Julian is also incredibly thankful for his doctors.

"Certainly I would say his doctor, Dr. Price, was wonderful. She was just real positive and encouraging," Deborah Julian said. "Any questions that we had, she was happy to answer and she said 'Other than what you have to do, just try to keep your schedule as is and do just what you normally would be doing and that's what we did.'"

On the last day of his main course of treatment, Dave Julian brought the staff at his treatment center a big bouquet of roses to show them his appreciation.

"It was nice because they really showed their appreciation," he said. "I just wanted to make sure that they understood I really appreciated all that they were doing for me and I can't praise them enough."

Once Dave Julian's main course of treatment was done, all Deborah Julian wanted to see was his lab work.

"I just wanted to know that his treatment had been successful," she said.

Dave Julian will continue to undergo hormone shots for his cancer treatment for the next several months, up to 18 total months. Once this is done, both Dave and Deborah will have to wait and see what happens, they said.

Deborah Julian encourages families who find themselves dealing with the aftermath of a cancer diagnosis to listen to the doctors and do what they say. Also, if a family member suspects there may be a problem, don't be afraid to find out if there's really a problem, she said.

"The sooner they can start treatment, the better your chances are of making it through," Deborah Julian said.

Dave Julian encourages people to not delay when it comes to checking out health problems.

"It's like having that awful tasting medicine that you have to take sometimes," Dave Julian said. "You're not going to be able to talk somebody out of taking the medicine, so you might as well just go ahead, take your medicine because the sooner you take it, the quicker you can recover from it."



Dr. Erika Ragar removes stitches from Rich Trivett's arm from his melanoma removal surgery at Franciscan Health Indianapolis on Sept. 19. Trivett was diagnosed with an early-stage melanoma in late July, and had the cancer removed Sept. 6.

## AWAKENING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE E9

cancer was in the early stage, they told their sons. Overall, his family has handled the news of cancer well, saying they are in this together, Trivett said.

"The boys were a little upset to think that I would not have told them until after the wedding. Because if it had been really bad, they would have wanted to know so that we could spend whatever time that we had," Trivett said.

On Sept. 6, Trivett had surgery to remove the cancerous tissue. The excision procedure lasted 45 minutes, removing that first layer of skin with the melanoma. This treatment is common for early stages of the disease, he said.

The procedure was outpatient, so Trivett went home the day-of and he went to his son's wedding the next week, while awaiting for his next post-operation appointment on Sept. 19.

The appointment brought more good news. The cancer had been removed; no more signs of it was present.

He felt great, he said at the appointment. Now he could get back to two of his favorite activities — playing racquetball and golfing.

Trivett recognized he is fortunate to have had a quick cancer journey, as not everyone who is diagnosed does. He learned a lot about the experience, though.

## The Trivett File

**Name:** Rich Trivett

**Age:** 65

**Diagnosis:** Melanoma

**Treatment:** Outpatient procedure to remove the cancer from the first layer of skin.

**What has cancer taught you?**

"Get checked out, get checked up ... it's something that people don't think about. Melanoma is probably not something that people give a lot thought to. You think about lung cancer. You think about various cancers of the liver, and different things about cancer. But melanoma, you don't think about it. And it can hurt as bad as what some of the other ones can, if not treated and not taken care of."

**How has cancer changed you?**

"You appreciate things. I mean, and honestly, this is so new to me. And my diagnosis has been pretty good. But it makes you appreciate things ... Those times with the sleepless nights and you're saying your goodbyes and all that. It gives you a rude awakening of how how fragile life is. You know, I'm pretty active I golf, I play racquetball. I'm pretty active in my daily life. And you don't think about having

something like that that could be the end. It's one of those things that you, just don't take things for granted. You appreciate your moments and again, it's only a little over a month for me. And I think I'm gonna come out of this thing pretty good. But it does bring that reality that you know, life is precious and you need to enjoy it."

**What would you tell someone just diagnosed?**

"It's hard to believe that you were diagnosed. I still can't today. It's hard to think that I have any form of cancer, but when you have it, it's a harsh reality, that it can happen to anyone. I don't smoke, I don't drink. All these things that you're not supposed to do and I still have something that happened because I was out in the sun. Probably too much. Somebody who's just diagnosed it. Take it, and don't expect the worst. I mean, I was I was preparing for the worst. But I was preparing for you know, whatever. And I don't know what I could tell anyone because everybody handles things differently. But I was prepared for the worst and I really was expecting them to say bad things, but I was really glad I didn't get that."

He emphasized the importance now of getting checked regularly by his dermatologist. He thinks not many people are aware of melanoma, and he hopes his story can bring more awareness to prevent it, and catch it early.

"Thank goodness I've been going in every year and getting checked out. If I hadn't, and I had waited for two years to do this one, it could have been fatal," Trivett said. "You need to go get checked up because if you don't get things checked

out, it can kill you." Ragar, during Trivett's Sept. 19 appointment, explained doctors are not certain on what exactly causes melanoma. However, many cases are linked to childhood sun blistering, or sun burn, and then cancer can surface in adults who are roughly around the age of 60.

"When you have it, it's a harsh reality, that it can happen to anyone," Trivett said. "I don't smoke, I don't drink. All these things that you're not supposed to do, and I

still have something that happened because I was out in the sun. Probably too much."

At what is hopefully the end of his journey with cancer, Trivett has learned to appreciate life a little more after this.

"It gives you a rude awakening of how fragile life is," Trivett said. "You know, I'm pretty active. I golf, I play racquetball. I'm pretty active in my daily life. And you don't think about having something like that that could be the end."

## EARLY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE E8

In addition, her disability check was delayed for 70 days.

But through the assistance fund, she was able

to stay afloat.

"I can't tell you what they've done for me," she said. "I haven't had to worry financially. Because disability didn't come, I was literally surviving on what little I'd saved up,

and help from my parents."

Chemotherapy all but wiped out the tumor in her breast, and doctors hope that the lumpectomy removed any other cancerous cells. Whitman will next go through three

weeks of radiation.

As part of the Compass trial, doctors will follow Whitman for the next 15 years to see if the approach prevented the cancer from recurring. "Fifteen years seems

like a lot, but I know it won't seem as bad as it goes on. There are a lot of visits the first couple of years, but they get fewer after that," she said.

With a majority of her treatment complete, and

it appears that she will be done by the end of the year, Whitman is looking forward to putting a tumultuous 2022 behind her.

"This year has been rough. I need 2023 to be here," she said.

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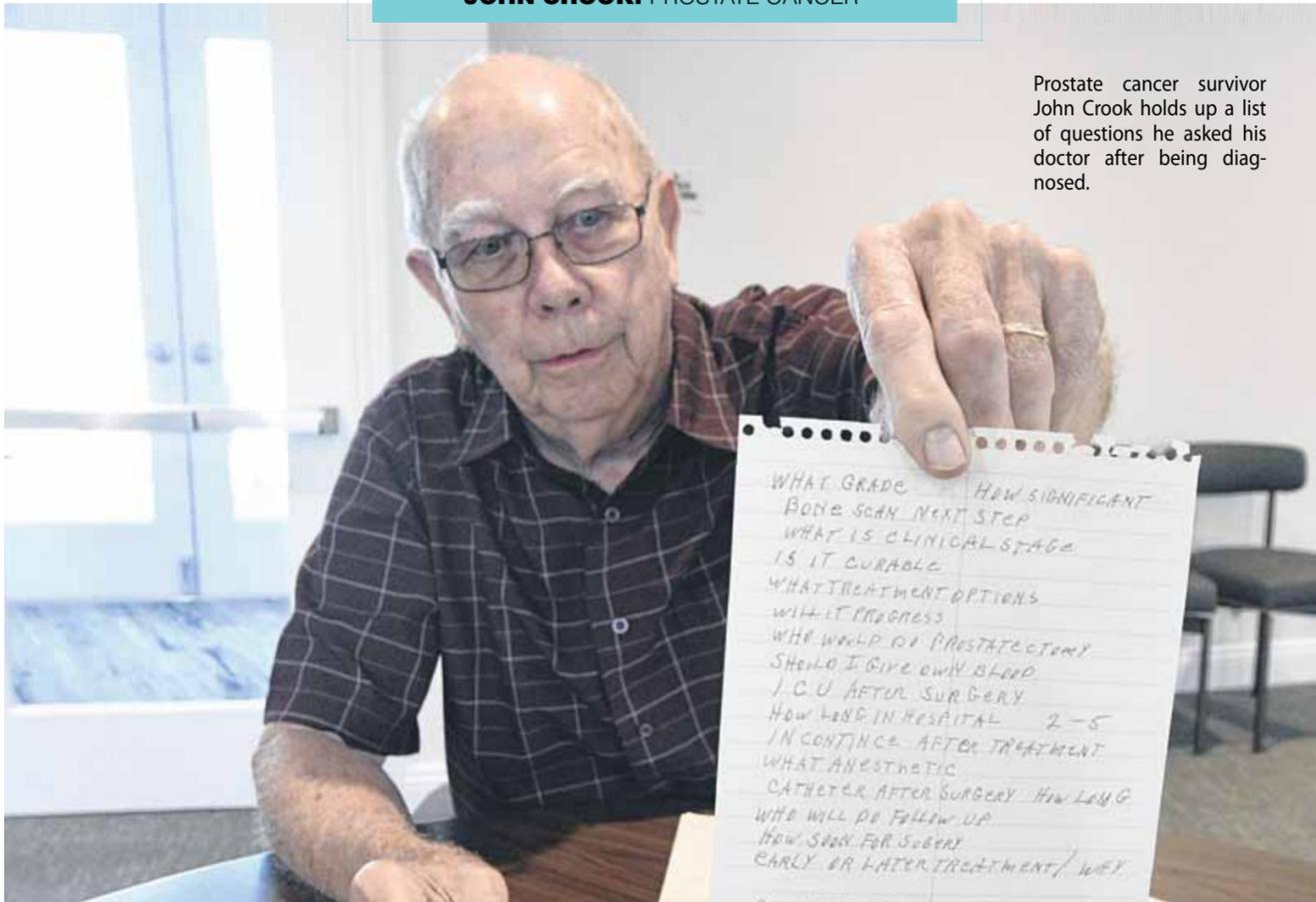
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## JOHN CROOK: PROSTATE CANCER



Prostate cancer survivor John Crook holds up a list of questions he asked his doctor after being diagnosed.

# UPS and downs

## Franklin man thought experimental treatment cured prostate cancer, until it came back

After an appearance on television to discuss the success of an experimental treatment for prostate cancer, it seemed as if all his worries were behind him.

But Franklin resident John Crook had to fight cancer again, and then a third time, before finally eradicating the disease 16 years ago.

In 2001, Crook went into his annual prostate exam feeling completely fine. His physician, Dr. Michael Koch, found something, though.

"They did an exam and there were no symptoms of anything but they felt something in there, a nodule. They said there was nothing to worry about but he would like to do a biopsy. This was all new to me," Crook said. "They did the biopsy and it came back that I had cancer cells in two quadrants of my prostate."

Crook scored a six on the Gleason test, used to measure how abnormal prostate cancer cells look and how likely the cancer is to advance and spread.

On a scale up to 10, higher numbers mean a worse outlook, according to information from Mount Sinai Hospital.

Crook's score was indicative of low-grade cancer.

"When you're diagnosed with cancer, it scares you to death," Crook said. "I knew nothing. My family and I did all the research we could and Dr. Koch suggested a book, 'Prostate and Cancer,' and I read that book."

Crook went to a follow-up appointment with his wife and went over several options with his doctor, including complete prostate surgery, implanted radiation seeds to stop the cancer cells from spreading, or a third option, to do nothing, as his cancer was generally not fatal.

Instead, Crook went with a fourth option, asking if there was any experimental treatment that the doctor knew of. It turned out there was—a program being pioneered by Koch and Dr. Thomas Gardner, who specialized in cancers of the of the urinary tract including prostate, kidney and bladder.

The treatment was High Intensity Focused Ultrasound, or HIFU, which was touted as a minimally invasive procedure he could get done with outpatient care. The treatment delivers the high intensity ultrasound transrectally to heat-treat a specific area of the prostate containing cancer cells.

"It was being studied in Japan and it had recently been approved for 20 people in the United States under the direction of Dr. Koch and Dr. Gardner. Dr. Koch

said, 'I think you're a good candidate,'" Crook said.

Crook underwent the procedure in February of 2002, and his prostate-specific antigen test, used to measure the chance of the cancer's reoccurrence, went from a 200 score around the time of the procedure to less than one three months later.

The success was so drastic that seven months later, Crook was interviewed by an Orlando, Florida, TV station to discuss the procedure.

But the rosy outlook did not last. Toward the end of 2002, Crook went back for a prostate-specific antigen check. The number had increased to 2.5, and then had gone up even more six months later. Following a biopsy, Koch told him that he still had cancer, and they could try the procedure again.

"We did it a second time, in August of 2003," Crook said. "The second time, I knew what to expect, but I was just wondering, of course, and one thing led to another, and two years later, it failed again."

This time, Koch recommended a robotic prostatectomy procedure, involving a pair of scissors, a hose, a camera and a balloon, to remove his prostate.

"It's all on the computer. They go in with instruments and snip, snip, snip and they put it in a balloon and they take it out. It interrupts your urethra and they glue it back together," Crook said.

On June 12, 2006, Crook had the robotic procedure.

"I've always been a believer, but I didn't know, so when I'm making this decision and they're preparing and all that, I just talked to the Lord. I said 'Lord, if it be your will,'" he said.

In recovery, he had to use a catheter, and for a time Crook feared he would have to wear a diaper for the rest of his life. Luckily, when he removed the diaper, it was dry, he said.

Sixteen years later, Crook remains cancer free.

Crook credits his faith, his family and the doctors who helped him along the way for his recovery, and advises all men over the age of 45 to get regular prostate exams.

"My advice is early detection and definitely take care of yourself," Crook said. "I knew more about my body than I ever wanted to know. Any man 45 and older, do your regular checkups. Don't put it off."

On the other side of his cancer journey, he no longer fears the disease.

"It is a scary word, it scares you to death," Crook said. "I'm no longer afraid of cancer, I have no fear. I'm 84 years old now and I've had a wonderful life."

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IS IT CURABLE  
WHAT TREATMENT OPTIONS  
WHAT PROGNOSIS  
WHY WOULD I DO PROSTATECTOMY  
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### STORY AND PHOTO BY

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“My advice is early detection and definitely take care of yourself.”

JOHN CROOK

### The Crook File

**Name:** John Crook

**Age:** 84

**Diagnosis:** Prostate cancer

**Treatment:** High Intensity Focused Ultrasound (HIFU) and robotic prostatectomy.

**What has cancer taught you?**

"Take care of yourself." Also, "Any man over 45, do your regular checkups. Don't put it off."

**How has cancer changed you?**

"It scares you to death, but I'm no longer afraid of cancer. I have no fear. I'm 84 years old and I have a wonderful life and I'm grateful."

**What would you tell someone just diagnosed?**

About HIFU: "There were 20 (people) in the clinical trial, and 16 were a success. 20 years later, I'm glad I did that and maybe it would be a success for someone else. I would recommend it if you're a candidate."

About state of mind: "Trust the Lord, He will direct your path."

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