



**Cliff Holly**

Cliff “Rink” Holly first recognized something was wrong while he was at a wedding reception. He filled his plate up with food but could not swallow. Cliff and his wife Susan decided to schedule an appointment with Dr. John Marshall. Multiple tests performed by Dr. Marshall all delivered bad news. Cliff was diagnosed with Stage 4 Esophageal Cancer. Cliff says “After I first learned I had cancer and did my crying, I never thought about dying again.” The word cancer bothered him but he decided that “it was the hand that was dealt to me and I am going to play it out.”

Cliff was given a treatment plan with a 5% success rate. He decided it was his best option and began treatment. Cliff drove himself to Jennie Edmundson Hospital every week for radiation and chemotherapy. He says, “Monday’s were the hardest because of the 6-8 hours of treatment. The rest of the week I wore a chemo pump and came in for radiation each day; then on the weekends I had to come to Heartland Oncology for shots of Neupogen to build up my cells so I could start all over the following Monday.” This treatment plan went on for two months. Cliff says, “To make the time go by faster I would block out the treatments and think of other things.”

The doctors told Cliff that good nutrition was very important and eating as much as he could was what he needed to do. After declining the treatment plan that included a feeding tube, he was told to eat a lot and to

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keep his weight up. The problem was that nothing tasted good. Susan would fix wonderful meals and all of his favorite foods, but he found himself not being able to eat much of anything but his one love, mashed potatoes. Cliff’s weight dropped to 190 pounds during this time.

Cliff’s entire family was very supportive through his treatment. He explains, “I was the one receiving the treatments, but it was just as hard on them. At first, Susan would get on the Internet to research my options, but soon gave this up because everything she found online was more and more scary and depressing. She would come home to check on me and then she would go downstairs and cry. She felt helpless because she couldn’t help me. I felt helpless because I couldn’t comfort her.” Cliff felt half as strong as he was before the treatment and that concerned him. He expressed, “I could not protect Susan and that bothered me a lot.”

During his treatment, he took care of his garden in the backyard. He describes “I crawled to my garden and planted a tomato plant. Then I would crawl back to my chair and rest for 15 minutes. Even though I had very little strength, I tried to keep busy all the time.”

Cliff now sees Dr. John Marshall about every three months and goes back to Heartland Oncology at Jennie once a year for his annual checkup. He loves to go back and see all his nurses. They give him a hard time but lots of hugs, too. He has been cancer free for 10 years.

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Cliff’s advice to others facing cancer is, “do what the doctors tell you, never lose faith and have a good attitude. I was given a 5% chance of survival and I am here to tell you that cancer can be whipped.”

Cliff is thankful to have a close family that is very supportive and helpful. This experience has changed his



Cliff would like everyone to know that he is available to speak with anyone that has been diagnosed with cancer. He says, "People like to talk to others that have survived and can tell them what lies ahead. "I figure I beat the odds because it was not my time. I am grateful. My life has been good - I would not change a thing."

During treatment Cliff decided to retire and now enjoys taking care of his yard and garden, cooking, and traveling. After his last treatment, Cliff and Susan spent time with their children which included a week in Hawaii and Guam. Although he felt weak most of the trip, he knew if he pushed a little more each day he would regain his strength. He also purchased a new red Corvette convertible and thoroughly enjoys his ride! ■

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faith and he now feels closer to God and his loved ones. He had many people praying for him and he was on a lot of prayer lists. He believes that this experience changed his whole attitude on life and he is a better person all the way around. Cliff says "Cancer had a positive effect on me. It helped me turn my life around. Getting cancer was not a good thing, but the way I turned my life around was the good thing."



Cliff & his wife, Susan

*"I am here to tell you I am a miracle."*

**SPECIAL THANKS:**

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Dr. John Marshall

The Spirit of Courage Committee

My Family