



2010 – We've Only Just Begun

By Howard Dunkley, MACSC's Board Chairman

Remember Karen Carpenter singing "We've only just begun..." in 1970? Well, some are older and remember 1970. And some of us were not even born yet. Nevertheless, I'm sure that you've heard the song. Here we are in 2010, and in spite of our many challenges along the way, I hope that you can say with resolve, "I've only just begun."

It's June, but the events and fellowships of the Mid-Atlantic Cancer Support Center have only just begun. This mid-year newsletter is full of great stories and tributes. Through them, I hope that you will realize that you are not traveling on this road by yourself. Let us help you.

I want to use this space to personally thank individual and corporate sponsors and churches that help us help you. We have a new interactive website running now and we plan on posting their names there. We've got more to do. After all, we've only just begun.

Our Journey – Who is Really Driving?

By Elaine Snow

After 3 days of contemplating the words of Bobby's doctor, "go home to think about hospice and your plans," my spirit was still screaming "NO."

I knew it could be a bad case of denial, as many would probably agree, that after getting the worst case scenario, it's only natural to respond this way – but the nagging in my spirit just wouldn't go away. Where are you taking us, Lord?



Elaine and Bobby Snow with their prayer shawl

I then heard from a dear friend who was also fighting brain cancer. She was receiving encouragement and proposed treatment from Dr. Allan Friedman of Duke University. Upon googling for information about the doctor, I decided to call and uttered a silent prayer "Is this your will, Lord?" I was amazed the call actually rang through to Dr. Friedman's voicemail and I received a return call from his office within an hour. Copies of Bobby's medical records were overnighted that day. [continued on page 2]

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The purpose of this newsletter is to provide specialized information to supporters, members, and friends of the Mid-Atlantic Cancer Support Center.

As you may know, the symbol of the starfish in our logo is meaningful. We have learned to make a difference to even one friend or family coping with cancer. There are so many starfish washed up onto the seashore. Even though we can't reach them all, we can make a difference to at least one.



Who is Really Driving? [from page 1]

Within 3 days we received a call, asking us to come to Duke and meet with Dr. Friedman, Head of Neurosurgery, Dr. Jim Vredenburg, and the doctors of the Preston Robert Tisch Brain Tumor Center. Remarkably, their logo at Duke contains the words, "where there is hope." That is just what we needed because if they did not offer us anything else, we were out of options and time. I don't think you could get more concrete affirmation that God had something else in mind for us.

We packed our bags, our hopes, gassed up the car, and began our long drive to Durham. God definitely has a sense of humor, and the enemy is definitely a prowling adversary because at 8:00 p.m., forty miles from our destination, we heard a loud thud, grinding sound, and our entire car began to shake. Our speed went from 70 mph to 35 mph, with tractor trailers passing us at 80 mph, in the middle of nowhere.

We were now stranded five hours from home. We had come this far, and now we'd possibly miss our appointment at Duke.

Armed with prayer, we began searching for a place to stop - anything that would provide some help for us. We crept along, shuddering and grinding, and feeling very helpless and frustrated. But, we finally found an exit and at its end there was a wonderful surprise. There was a Hampton Inn, a Cracker Barrel, and three car dealerships! Hallelujah!!! God is definitely a God of provision...a good place to sleep, some delicious food to eat, and an opportunity to have our car looked at.

We made it to Duke with 4 minutes to spare before our appointment in the morning. We also have a new, more reliable car...my Christmas present from God and Bobby.

We walk (and drive) not by sight, but by faith. Cancer is a journey of faith in a God of hope, mercy, and grace. He is our provider! To date, Bobby is still on the clinical trial with Duke. He has long since passed his man given expiration date. We are very grateful to Duke and to God.

It is God - not man - who holds the roadmap, the timeline, and the keys of life in His hands. - ES

A Rough Road, Even for a Guy

By Tim Connelly , MACSC Board Member , November 20, 2009

In the early summer of 2006 I was awoken in the middle of the night with a burning sensation on the left side of my chest. My first thought was that I had been bitten by a spider or tick while playing golf, so I went back to sleep. A few weeks went by and my left breast was still sore. I tried not using deodorant to see if it would go away. I thought maybe I had picked up an allergy—one of the many nuisances that come with age. I didn't have any luck with that treatment plan. In June, while on a short trip to Harper's Ferry with my wife, I can remember my seat belt hitting my breast and sending pain up and down my entire left side.

A week or so later I made an appointment for my "annual physical," but was told that I would have to wait until August. Because I really didn't see this as an emergency, I didn't feel the need to schedule with another doctor. (You know us guys can tough things out.) It was just a little discomfort; so I waited until August and that's when my life became very intense.

Alas, my journey begins as I'm sitting on the exam room table with my doctor looking at his blackberry trying to determine if any of the medications I was currently taking could have been responsible for the lump in my breast. He looked up and said, "I'm going to send you for a mammogram just to be sure." I laughed and asked if guys can get a mammogram. He handed me my referral and wished me good luck. That night I showed the referral to my wife. I was very happy when she agreed to go with me to have the mammogram done. I really would have felt uncomfortable. [continued on page 4]

CLARE Ministry – A Ray of Sunshine

By Linda McStowe – MACSC Board Member

My Mother, Clare Ponoski, was quite a sparkle of joy! As the elected “Sunshine Lady” for her church, she performed wondrous deeds of compassion for those in need.

When Mom was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer we were shocked. There was no history of cancer in her family. Each of Clare’s 4 daughters (me, Sandy, Patty and Marie) took turns caring for her at the Villa Rosa nursing home. The love that Mom raised us with and shared with others, throughout her life, spilled over and flowed-out to other nursing home patients and caregivers. Conversations, the sharing of feelings, the holding of hands, prayer, help with eating meals, wheelchair walks, organizing public areas, decorating, gardening and painting all multiplied in that nursing home for a season. The staff even hired one of our sisters to work in the kitchen.

In Mom’s last days, before she died in my arms, a precious caregiver would say, “Fly away little butterfly. It’s time to fly up to God. Fly! Fly!” Since then, the colorful, wistful butterfly has come to symbolize Mom.



Clare and Linda

In 2009, I decided to start a small group within MACSC, called the “CLARE Ministry,” in honor of my “Sunshine Lady.” Of all the things Clare Ponoski has stood for, we now have an acronym for:



Cancer has touched my life in other ways, too. Patty Puleo, my courageous little sister, is a 2-time cancer survivor – Hodgkin’s 2-Stage – and recently Breast Cancer 3-Stage. When a long-time boss and dear friend – Dave Glavin - shockingly died of cancer, I was immensely saddened once again. Little did I expect a ray of sunshine from either Mom or Dave’s deaths. Connie, Dave’s lovely widow, decided to send a donation in honor of my work with MACSC and the CLARE Ministry. I will use Connie’s generous “launch” support to honor Mom, Dave and Geeslev Dzielgieweski. Geeslev is my son-in-law who died unexpectedly of cancer while in his 40’s, survived by his wife and 2 daughters.

Please keep an eye out for the announcement of MACSC’s upcoming “Strike Out Cancer” Bowling date – which will be the CLARE Ministry’s first event! We hope you’ll have fun bowling, sharing fellowship and supporting the volunteer efforts of MACSC. A little butterfly hopes so, too! - LM



Help Us Help Others

All Mid-Atlantic Cancer Support Center (MACSC) services are free and open to people with cancer, their families, and friends at any phase of their cancer treatment, recovery, survivorship process. Our activities are in support of, and in addition to, conventional medical treatment.

MACSC is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization and donations made to the MACSC are tax deductible. To donate, send your check to:

**MID-ATLANTIC
CANCER SUPPORT CENTER**
P.O. Box 2231
Annapolis, MD 21404

Local Cancer Support Groups

1st Monday of the Month 6:00

**Annapolis/Davidsonville
Cancer Support Group**
at Chesapeake Christian Fellowship
377 W. Central Ave
Davidsonville, MD.

Call Pat Burke at 443-321-2742.

2nd Monday of the Month 6:30

Bowie Cancer Support Group
at the Porter home on
Sudberry Lane, Bowie, MD.

RSVP to Fran at 301-464-8721.

3rd Monday of the Month 7:15

Crofton Cancer Support Group
at Community United Methodist
1690 Riedel Road
Crofton, MD.

Call Gary Todd at 410-451-1044

See our Website for more
information and list of events
www.MACancerSupport.org

A Rough Road, Even for a Guy [from page 2]

When we got there, I filled out the necessary paperwork and sat down in the waiting area thinking this would be the end and that nothing would become of the test. Wrong! Soon after the mammogram, the doctor came out and said something looked suspicious and I would need to have a sonogram. I had the sonogram two days later and the word I've grown to hate came up for the first time: "biopsy." Two days after the biopsy the results came back that I'd tested positive for cancer.

Surgery was something I had never experienced before and I was a little paranoid about having my body cut open. We went to Hopkins and consulted with the surgeon. She wanted to do the surgery in a week and at first I said yes and explained to her I would be traveling to Las Vegas the week following the surgery. She vehemently discouraged this idea and thought it best to reschedule the week we returned. I'm sure glad I took her advice because I didn't have a clue what I was in for.

After surgery I spent two weeks at home in my chair trying not to move much. Did you know they glue and tape you back together these days?! I was afraid the tape was going to come undone and my innards would leak out. Two weeks after the surgery I was back at the hospital to see my surgeon. She looked at the incision and asked how far I could move my arm, so I lifted it to about the nine o'clock position. She frowned and asked me to do it again and as I did, she grabbed my hand and moved it to about the twelve o'clock position. Tears came to my eyes as the doctor and I stood eye-to-eye and she exclaimed, "Hurts doesn't it." I asked for my arm back and promised to exercise it every day. I kept my promise.

My wife was great through the whole process. She would open the mail and read me all the greeting cards friends sent. She taped them to the bookshelves around the TV so I could see all the people who cared and were praying for me. Father Joe, our pastor, came to visit before my surgery. I remember him explaining how delicate and precious life is and that you don't really know and understand this until life is in peril. I think about his words often. Many friends and family members would come to visit while I lay in my chair recovering. Oftentimes I would fall asleep during their visits; yet, it was a genuine comfort to have them there. I could still feel their presence while I slept, which would sometimes make me smile.

Several weeks after the surgery, my chemotherapy sessions began. I had started back to work by then, so the office manager put a sleeping cot in my office to ensure that I could take a nap every afternoon. The effect of chemo limited the hours that I could work; so I would come as early as I could then leave once I ran out of energy. My food changed flavors too. Steaks had a flat taste, and vegetables, such as asparagus and baked potatoes with butter, had a wonderful flavor. I acquired a taste for chocolate brownies with ice cream and chocolate fudge on top.

Chemo was really hard. Treatments were scheduled every two weeks, so just when I thought I was returning to normal, it was time for another session. I really needed all the help I could get at this time. I was reminded of the picture of foot prints in the sand. Jesus was there with me picking me up and carrying me. My wife, daughters, family and co-workers were constantly with me to do what was needed for me to finish my journey. My friends at the Mid-Atlantic Cancer Support Center and all the doctors and nurses at Johns Hopkins aided in my comfort for His journey. This is a rough road to travel—nearly impossible. Thankfully we don't have to travel alone. -TC