

# Survival and Hope Life After Cancer



**KEVIN MELLIN, 60**  
**DIAGNOSIS: ESOPHAGEAL CANCER,**  
**STAGE 4**

## The Basics:

- **RESIDENCE:** Victorville
- **OCCUPATION:** Worked in construction. Now he is disabled due to diabetes with neuropathy
- **FAMILY:** Sons Joshua, 31; Travis, 30; and Tanner, 29; daughter, Susie Mellin, 27
- **HOBBIES:** Likes to hand out clothing to the homeless.
- **PHILOSOPHY:** I am an encourager, not a discourager. I am a messenger of God. A good attitude will get you through it.

By Alberta Hale Crigler

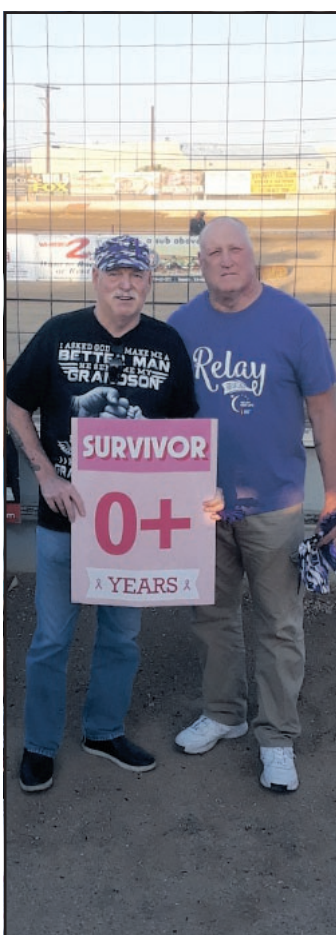
Kevin Mellin said when he first heard his cancer diagnosis, “I was stunned, I was ready to plan my funeral arrangements.

“The next day, I got a calm over me and God comforted me. I talked with other survivors and they said attitude has a lot to do with it. I said, ‘you are right, I am going to beat it and do whatever I have to do to stay alive.’”

Mellin’s initial symptoms were difficulty swallowing food and water.

He had never smoked, but “I did work in bars as a bouncer,” he said, “and my ex-wife smoked, and my dad was a smoker when I was growing up.

“They did a scan and a biopsy,” Mellin said. Although the diagnosis was officially confirmed by a lab, “the doctor knew right away when he did



the biopsy.”

Mellin was diagnosed in February, and his medical team jumped into action.

Mellin received radiation treatments for five weeks along with chemotherapy. Recently, he started chemotherapy again.

In September, two quarts of fluid were removed from around his lungs. “They wanted to see if it was cancer-related,” he said. “It showed up as a black mark around my lungs.

Now, he has a port with a pump. After a treatment, he is sent home, where the pump continues administering his chemo for three days.

Ideally, the tumor could be contained and removed.

But Mellin has diabetes, too. He has had half of his right foot removed and also suffers from neuropathy.

“I have a feeding tube,” he said. “When I don’t have an appetite, I can pump some Glucerna. But it has sugar, so when I am fighting one thing, I am against another.

Mellin, who is also known as KJ, says he has gained many friends on Facebook.

“Since my thing, my Facebook has blown up to over 1,000

people,” he said.

“They call me an inspiration. They stay tuned, and when I post something, I get a lot of responses.

“The love and support I get from people I have never met is overwhelming. They say I am a big part of their lives now.

Mellin has a lot of support from his family, too. His daughter Susie Mellin has created a GoFundMe page (Help KJ Beat Cancer!) to help with expenses not covered by insurance.

“When they told me how much each copay was going to cost me, I was blown away,” he said.

“I was one of those guys who always worked hard for his money. My doctor said he would work with me.”

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*“I was stunned, I was ready to plan my funeral arrangements”*

Mellin said when they heard his diagnosis, “My children cried. My caretaker son Travis, who lives with me, it really hit him bigtime. He read that esophageal cancer is not the best to have.

“My other sons are in Apple Valley and Victorville, and my daughter is in Rancho Cucamonga. When they are around, we take pictures and I get to brag on Facebook that this is my family.”

Mellin’s diabetes is a major obstacle in his recovery.

“If I didn’t have this neuropathy, not in my legs and feet, but through my whole body now, I could handle this cancer with no problem.”

Although he has not joined a support group, Mellin said, “I went to the (Wheel 2 Wheel) races in Victorville at the fairgrounds.

“It just happened to be cancer awareness night. Each person held a sign with how long they had survived.

“They gave me a nice purple

camouflage hat. I had some hope when I saw some people 20 years out.

Mellin advises other cancer patients: “Keep a positive attitude. Have strong faith and surround yourself with loved ones and people who care about you. They want you to stick around.”

## Caregiver Perspective



Travis Mellin said he was “devastated and scared” when he heard his father’s cancer diagnosis. “I just cried and that’s about it.

“I am still kind of going through it. It makes me appreciate him more.

“I feed him, I give him medicine when he needs it – basically whatever he needs.

“I feel worse when I see him sick and there is nothing I can do about it. He has been doing good with it. There have just been a couple times when is super sick and weak.



The American Cancer Society provides a 24 hour service to answer questions about diagnosis, insurance, local support and resources

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