

Survival and Hope Life After Cancer



About Me:

CITY: Helendale
JOB TITLE: Retired from secretarial work many years ago, widowed at 29 and stayed home with three children
FAMILY: Ronald Ross, 81, husband; Julie Hollander, 54, daughter; between us we had six kids
HOBBIES: Tennis, work out at the fitness center three days per week, walk the dog about two miles every morning
PHILOSOPHY: I wish there was something I could do to help some of these people. In radiation therapy, I saw a lot of people worse off than I am. It breaks my heart.

“I don’t feel so isolated; I’m not the only one.”



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

**www.cancer.org or
call 800-227-2345**

If you or someone you know would like to be featured in this series, please contact Liz McGiffin at liz.mcgiffin@cancer.org.

Carol Ross, 82 Type of Cancer: Breast

By Alberta Hale Crigler

In the end of December, Carol Ross was diagnosed with breast cancer.

“It was right before Christmas, so the holidays were not real happy for me,” she said.

“I was in shock. For some reason, I never thought I would get that.

“All the (risk factors) they say: heavy, sedentary, I don’t have those. I have been healthy all of my life.

“As soon as the doctor saw the ultrasound, he said, ‘You have breast cancer.’ I just started shaking. I was devastated.

“By the time you get referrals and insurance (approval), it was a couple of weeks. My lumpectomy surgery was in January.

“After surgery, my breast swelled up; it was big and red. I thought, what is this? It can’t be possible.

“They put me on antibiotics and after about two weeks of double D on one side and my regular B cup on the other side, the incision started draining.

“They thought they got it all, but the biopsy report came back and they said there were a few cells we didn’t get.

“I breezed through the first surgery; I was feeling good and thought it wasn’t as bad as I thought it would be.

“But they had to go in for the second surgery, and that really set me back.

“The doctor went back in under the original incision, opened it up, and then went farther into the arm pit to make sure this time she got it all.

“It finally healed up. I still have a nasty scar, but it is way at the side, so it isn’t that noticeable.

“Besides at my age it doesn’t matter, I’m not going to be doing any bikinis.”

Ross recently completed 6-1/2 weeks of follow-up radiation treatments at Mojave radiation center in Apple Valley.

“I had a bad radiation burn. It is just now going away. It was where they did only the one spot the last few days.

“When you finish your treatment, they have a bell you pick up and you ring it. All the therapists come out and hug you and celebrate. The doctor kept grabbing my hand and ringing it.

“They give you your diploma and they all sign it. It is pretty special.

“It is a short ceremony. They are pretty busy there, and things keep moving pretty fast. That was my last treatment. They do that for everyone.”

“You go on the Internet,” she said, “and you see all of these other people have had these symptoms too.

“I don’t feel so isolated; I’m not the only one.

“I found friends at the radiation center, and that helped. We were all going through it together.

“I met one couple, and he was going through prostate cancer.

“She was wearing a beautiful jeweled baseball cap with the pink cancer logo and heart and it said ‘Hope.’

“She made one for me, too.

“Some people don’t want to talk; they feel too sad and miserable. That was hard for me, seeing those other people.

“The radiation machine coming down (at you), is kind of frightening at first.

“I became friends with the technician who helps get you in these awkward positions (for treatments).



“They were all young. I didn’t shed one tear with all the treatment and surgeries.

“But when I went to say goodbye to these kids, I started crying, and we were hugging and kissing.

“My doctor has a million dollar-smile and he was great.

“He said, ‘You will be fine. Next year at this time you will be healthy and feeling great again.’”

Ross said her family was “very concerned but very positive, very supportive” throughout her surgeries and treatment.

“My daughter Julie was my right arm; Ron was my caregiver,” she said. “Julie lives in Newport Beach, and she came for my surgeries.

“I think we beat it and I am hopeful.

“I am just going to try and go on and live my life. I have a good life, good family, good friends.”

For anyone undergoing treatment for cancer, Ross has some advice: “Be positive. Be strong. Try to live your life; be optimistic.”

Caregiver perspective:

Ronald Ross cared for his wife, Julie, during her cancer treatment.

“When she had her rash, I had to apply medication to those areas for relief,” he said. “I went to the pharmacies and got all the medications for her.

“I drove her five days per week for 6-1/2 weeks to Apple Valley, which is about 25 miles each way.

I thought Carol would beat this and her doctor thought she would beat this, and so far, she has. I have been very optimistic the whole time.

“We went through this together. I tried to be as positive as I possibly could.

“I really felt we were going to get through this. I have not changed that feeling at all.”

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