

REFLECTIONS *of a journey*



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Bill and Rita Hinner

It's been more than 20 years since Bill Hinner took his doctor's advice and quit smoking, something he could never convince his wife to do.

After Bill retired in November 1993, the couple traveled to Las Vegas to celebrate. When they returned, Rita wasn't feeling well and decided to visit the doctor.

She was asked to come back two weeks later for a checkup.

"I usually went with her, but that day for whatever reason I couldn't make it," he said. "So I get home and she's sitting here and she just looks at me and says, 'I have lung cancer.'"

The disease was advanced enough that doctors ruled out surgery and focused instead on radiation and chemotherapy to extend her life.

Rita died 14 months later, leaving behind her husband and six children.

"There were times when she seemed better and I thought she was going to beat it," Hinner said. "But that was probably just because I was with her every day. I guess the people who didn't

live with her knew she was going downhill."

Then one day her doctor told Bill the fight was coming to an end.

"I don't know if he said she had six months or six days or six hours," he said. "It really didn't matter. It finally hit me that she was going to die, but she took it like she was waiting to hear it."



Rita Hinner continued to smoke while she fought the cancer, after doctors told her it didn't matter any longer. Then a few days before her death, she called her husband to her bedside.

"She told me I finally got my wish – she quit smoking," he said. "She didn't

have the energy to inhale anymore."

While lung cancer remains the least curable cancer, it still is the most preventable.

"I just don't understand all these young people who start smoking," Hinner said. "Back when I was 17 they didn't tell you cigarettes were bad for you. Today, there's no way that I would ever start. It can kill you."