

COURAGE, LIFE & HOPE

REFLECTIONS *of a journey*



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REGIONAL
CANCER CENTER

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Jim McManus

Jim McManus has been changed by cancer, as anyone who has been touched by the disease will tell you.

But Jim hasn't become bitter or fearful through his experience. He's become something of a community cancer resource. When he was diagnosed with prostate cancer in May 1998, the first thing Jim and his wife Mary Lou did was educate themselves.

"I really can't remember that I was scared," McManus said. "I don't know that I can say I really had time to think about it, because we were so busy with talking and studying and digging."

After undergoing a prostatectomy, he lived cancer-free for several years. Then, in November 2003, his level of Prostate Specific Antigen began rising again. A subsequent bone scan and CT scan found that the cancer had metastasized to his left hip and femur.

Radiation therapy cleared up the problem areas, but a recurrence on the other side of his body could not be treated with the same method.

So McManus began chemotherapy in February, and continues today.

"You learn to live with it," he said.

"We had a period of no problems until this last fall. Then I guess you start over."

Starting again was easier for him because of the crash course in cancer he had given himself since 1998. In addition to educating himself, McManus has been involved with an interfaith support group through his parish, which he helped found four years ago this summer. As a facilitator for the group, he has educated himself about cancer and treatments.

Today, an informed and experienced cancer patient, McManus enthusiastically

meets with people who have been newly diagnosed, and offers them guidance – not as a health professional, but as a savvy health care consumer.

"It's so important for people, when they find out that they have prostate cancer, to trust in somebody like me; to sit down and learn what they have to know before they make decisions," McManus said. "It's not that I'm going to educate them medically, it's that I can make them cognizant of the questions they will have to ask their doctor."

Cancer patients have a special bond, and McManus said the wonderful treatment centers in the Wausau area are a boon not just for their high level of care, but because they provide people with a place to meet and build relationships. This is something he and other cancer patients excel at.

"I'm much closer to my family," he said. "My wife

and I are closer, have a better relationship. But there are certain people who shy away from you. That's one of the tragedies, that people don't realize that you don't want cancer to change your relationship."

McManus continues to make headway in that regard. He recently spoke at his church, beginning his message with a question: "Can you find happiness when you have cancer?" His answer is an emphatic Yes! The things he has learned and the marvelous friends he has made McManus as happy now as he's ever been.

And recent good news gives him another reason for happiness. On May 12, test results showed that his chemotherapy appears to be succeeding. His cancer is receding.

