

## Royce Eckols



My name is Royce Eckols. I am 60 years old. I was employed in the oilfield, at Cal-Dive as a warehouseman until I found out that I had Cancer.

On October 20, 2004, my life, my wife, and my son's lives were turned upside down. The news from my ENT doctor after a routine sinus surgery was that I had cancer in the right side of my face.

The cancer was adenoid cystic carcinoma. The only way to remove it was by surgery. After the swelling went down, our trips to New Orleans began. We spent the next three weeks back and forth to the doctor planning for the surgery to remove all my teeth to get ready for the surgery to remove the cancer in an operation that would take 8 to 11 hours and 8 to 10 days in ICU.

All this time, the last pay check that I received from my company was on November 15, 2004. I applied for disability in November and we received our first check in June of 2005. After the surgery, we were back and forth to New Orleans every week until I was released in March to begin taking radiation treatments in Thibodaux, LA for six weeks, five days a week. The mileage back and forth to New Orleans is a 186 mile round trip and the Thibodaux trip is an 86 mile round trip. As you can see, paying for the gas alone was draining our savings. We were given some gas cards from the American Cancer Society and the Lance Armstrong Foundation.

I could go into detail over every scary moment we have had during this ordeal, but this story would be way too long. After being cleared from radiation, we started the process to rebuild my mouth because all that I had was a mouth piece held in by Seabond to cover the hole in my mouth caused by the surgery. As the dentist completed his procedure, the plastic surgeon began preparing to reconstruct my face. All of this was going fine and then along came Hurricane Katrina and then Rita which destroyed New Orleans. Due to the two hurricanes, I lost contact with all of my doctors. I had no doctors, a mouth that you could not fix because I had no doctor. I went from August to October without having any contact at all because everything was destroyed. When things started to get back to normal, they informed me the cancer had moved into my lungs and they were not prepared to deal with it. We made several trips out of state to find another doctor to do the surgery. More money out of pocket and still no results. To add more stress, I now had to pay my cobra insurance.

The doctor who first diagnosed the cancer pulled some strings and got me into the MD Anderson Cancer Center. I have been there for the last six months.

We were in Houston every week for two months. We spent half of April and all of May in Houston. We are now getting ready for a 13 week clinical trial that we hope and pray will stop the cancer from growing. They have done the reconstruction and have began building an operator for my mouth that will let me get back to being able to eat food.

My faith has always been strong and my wife has been the rock that has held this battle together. There have been times when I feel lost, but when I walk down the halls of the hospital and meet and hear the stories of other cancer victims I gain more strength and become stronger because there are some people in worse shape than I am. After hearing from the Bright Light Foundation, my goal is to defeat this thing called CANCER. May God bless you and all the people associated with your foundation.

Cancer is not a trip; it's a journey and with it brings financial burden and stress on your family and all of your loved ones. Myself as the cancer victim, I have to be stronger not only for me, but for all my family. People like you and your group make it possible for all people with illnesses to hold their heads up high. You all do not know how it makes one feel to know there is someone else in their corner fighting right along side of them.

Thanks to you, the Bright Light Foundation, for being there for all of us who are in need.

Sincerely,

Royce Wayne Eckols