

# Editorial: Life, death, healing and opportunity; the week we won't forget

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Have you ever found yourself in the middle of a week, thinking: "This is one of those weeks I'm always going to remember"?



Marv Knox

Our family just lived through a week like that. True to the messy irregularities of life, it didn't exactly fit a calendar week. It began on Monday and ended on Sunday. But it happened across seven consecutive days. A week we'll always remember.

Monday, March 20, began with celebration and, to be honest, pain. On that day, I completed six weeks of radiation treatment, thank the Lord, Madame Curie and a host of scientists and physicians.

My saga began more than a year ago, when I felt a small, hard lump under my right temple. Fast forward to late last fall, when what we thought was a benign fibrous mass turned out to be an acinic cell carcinoma—a malignant tumor. After surgery to remove the tumor and surgery to repair nerve damage to my eye, the time came for radiation.

**Surgeries vs. radiation**

Who knew surgeries are like waltzes through birthday parties compared to lying still while an X-ray machine blasts the side of your head? Since the effects of radiation accumulate, everything feels great for about three weeks. Then comes the dry mouth. And the “sunburn.” And the hair loss. And the throat and mouth sores. And the fatigue. And the abiding taste of metal.

I hope and pray my radiation treatments whipped any little cancer cells as mercilessly as they whipped my face, neck and head. My doctors think so, and they don’t expect this cancer to come back.

Here’s something I learned: Rich blessings glimmer within the dark, damnable cloud of cancer. Lying under radiation for 30 days, I counted blessings I had taken for granted—the love of family, the prayers of friends. And I encountered blessings I never considered—the grace of molecular science, the sweet presence of God you can’t recognize until you realize you’re completely powerless.

Also, I’ve got to name names: Doctors Bob Steckler, Jim Merritt and James Petrikas. Radiation techs Jessica, Leslie, Katie, P-Nut and Vince. Dr. Petrikas’ nurse, Katie. Skilled and kind. Absolutely compassionate. They could teach ministry students how to express care.

So, I finished radiation Monday and feel a smidge stronger every day.

### **Along comes Rosemary**

And I felt much better, at least in another way, the very next day. Around the time I drove to my last radiation treatment, our younger daughter, Molly, went into labor. Not much later—easy for me to say; I wasn’t great with child—Baby Rosemary arrived not long after midnight Tuesday morning.

In addition to her mama, she joined her daddy, David, and big sister,

Eleanor, to complete the wing of our family who live in Nashville. Rosie's new grandmothers, Joanna and Ruth, drove out to welcome her to the family and to take care of Eleanor during her hospital stay. Jo and I give thanks for those darling granddaughters, and for their cousins, Ezra and Abram.

### **Jim goes to heaven**

Joanna returned home Thursday evening, ready to sleep in her own bed and get back to work. But work had to wait when she received a call not long after midnight Friday. Her dad, Jim Jarchow, fell for the third time in about a week, and his outlook wasn't optimistic. The flu and then the falls compounded ongoing degradation of his 90-year-old body.

Over the weekend, his nearby family—daughters Julia, Janis and Joanna; grandson, Greg, and his family, Penny, Peyton and Parker; and I—all had opportunities to say our goodbyes and prayers for peaceful passage.

The Lord answered those prayers early Sunday, when Jim went home to heaven. And if I've been right in an ongoing debate he and I conducted across the years, he knew exactly who greeted him with a hug and a kiss on the other side: The love of his life, Margie, of course.

### **Aaron steps up**

A few hours later, the final family episode of the week took place down in Buda, where Hays Hills Baptist Church elected Aaron—our other son-in-law, husband to our older daughter, Lindsay, and daddy to Ezra and Abram—as their lead pastor after almost six years as children's pastor.

Words can't begin to describe how proud I am of that young man. Of his faithfulness to Jesus and love for the church, as well as his love for our daughter and their sons, who they're raising in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Of his growing maturity and wisdom.

## **Life lessons**

OK, so this isn't a real editorial. If I still were writing my old "Down Home" column, this would be it. I don't have any big points to make, except what I hope is obvious in my life and in yours:

- God is present in all of life—birth and death, pain and healing, long trips and new ventures. Despite the circumstances, God provides peace that surpasses all understanding and guards our hearts and minds against the ravages of evil.
- Cherish both life's highs and lows. In fact, respect and revel in the lows, because that's often when the chaos quietens enough to hear the "still, small voice" of God, right by your ear. Even the one swollen from radiation. Or the other one, hovering over the final breaths of a faithful husband, father and grandfather.
- Don't take any moments for granted. You never know what the next will bring, and you're not likely to experience another just like this one.

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