

# Thoracic Surgery Patients

## BENEFIT FROM EXPERIENCED CAREGIVERS



DAVID BROWN AND HIS WIFE OF 52 YEARS, MARY LOU.

**I**n July of 2007, David Brown of Bethel Park went to his doctor for a routine physical.

At the time, the then 70-year-old ex-Marine was feeling relatively fine. He remembers thinking, though, that he might be coming down with a mild cold because he was repeatedly clearing his throat. He mentioned the nagging throat clearing to his doctor. And, he told him, every now and then he spit up a little blood, too.

Concerned, the doctor wrote an order for a chest x-ray for Brown, who had the test done at St. Clair Hospital Outpatient Center in Bethel Park, walking distance from his home on Highland Road.

Clinicians at the Outpatient Center contacted Brown's primary care physician just hours after his visit. The chest x-ray showed a spot on his left lung. Additional tests revealed the diagnosis: Stage 2 squamous cell lung cancer. It wasn't long before the retired airline employee had surgery to remove his entire left lung. He spent eight days in St. Clair Hospital, the first five of which were in Intensive Care.



DAVID BROWN, LUNG CANCER SURVIVOR

Two years post surgery, Brown does not need supplemental oxygen and continues to work in his well-manicured yard and chase after his 7-pound, 12-year-old Chihuahua, Abby.

"He had absolutely terrific care at St. Clair," recalled Mary Lou, Brown's wife of 52 years. "The people in Intensive Care were wonderful. I could call them for information. I could come in. They would tell me everything."

Brown later underwent chemotherapy to rid his body of any remaining cancer cells. Two years later, Brown is cancer free and credits his thoracic surgeon, Richard H. Maley, Jr., M.D., with helping save his life. "I thought Dr. Maley was very qualified," Mrs. Brown said. "He explained everything before and after the surgery. And it was all in layman's terms and very detailed. He also explained what David should expect during his recovery. And what I should expect as a caregiver."

Dr. Maley said Brown is fortunate in that a chest x-ray detected his lung cancer – the leading cancer killer of American men and women in the United States. "Lung cancer is so deadly because in its early stages it is asymptomatic (does not have symptoms) and, to date, there is no really good screening test for

early stage lung cancer," Dr. Maley said.

Chest x-rays are simply not sensitive enough to detect lung cancer in its earliest, most cureable stages, he said, adding that having patients spit into a cup and looking for cancer cells in the sputum sample has not proven very effective either.

Despite the limitations of chest x-rays for detecting lung cancer in its earliest stages, it usually is a chest x-ray that ends up revealing the cancer. In Brown's case, a chest x-ray also revealed an abdominal aneurysm, which required surgery almost one year to the date of the lung cancer surgery.

"As it turns out, our most cureable patients are the ones who had chest x-rays before routine surgery – such as cataract removal – and their doctors notice a spot on the lung," Dr. Maley said, adding additional tests and biopsies are used to confirm that it is cancer.

As a thoracic subspecialist, Dr. Maley also performs surgery on patients suffering from esophageal cancer and other malignancies, as well as benign diseases of the chest including gastroesophageal reflux, hiatal hernia and lung infections, but his typical thoracic patient is a 60-to 90-year-old person suffering from lung cancer. "A lot of them are ex-smokers, with a history of smoking at least one pack of cigarettes a day for at least 20 years."

Brown fits squarely into that category. He started smoking at age 19 in the U.S. Marine Corps and continued the habit for two decades before quitting. Over the next three decades he limited himself to the occasional cigar. But the damage had been done.

Two years post surgery, Brown – a familiar face to a lot of South Hills residents due to his longtime involvement with his son, Matt, in area baseball and football programs – does not need supplemental oxygen and continues to work in his well-manicured yard and chase after his 7-pound, 12-year-old Chihuahua, Abby. He also exercises by walking the hilly streets of his neighborhood and the hallways of South Hills Village mall when the weather is not cooperating.

Mrs. Brown said she thinks he looks 10 years younger than he did before the surgery. "You have to be very grateful considering everything he went through. I think he is doing very well."

Dr. Maley and his partner, Mathew Van Deusen, M.D., perform more than 300 procedures a year, including operations using minimally invasive techniques.

"You can't get better lung surgery in any hospital in this city than at St. Clair Hospital," Dr. Maley said.

### RICHARD H. MALEY, JR., M. D.

Dr. Maley earned his medical degree at Hahnemann University in Philadelphia and completed his residency in general surgery at the University of Kentucky, Lexington. He also completed a fellowship in Trauma/Critical Care at the University of Kentucky. Dr. Maley completed his residency in cardiothoracic surgery at the University of Pittsburgh and a fellowship in thoracic surgery at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York City. He is board-certified by The American Board of Surgery.



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