

HOW CANCER CHANGED MY PERSPECTIVE

For Shelly Borden, a yearlong battle with cancer started with a bump on his tonsil that wouldn't go away.

"When I touched it, I knew it was out of the ordinary," he said.

During the procedure to cut out the bump, his doctor removed 40 lymph nodes, and two were cancerous.

"I was just petrified," Borden said. "I was 53 years old, healthy as a horse my entire life. A cancer diagnosis will wake you up."

After the surgery, Borden started a seven-week regimen of radiation. His doctor, Michael Talbert, M.D., told him the odds were this treatment would allow him to live a long life, but he was honest about the difficulty of the process. For patients with head and neck cancers, treatment can be harder.

Borden's radiation required a mask of webbing over his face and shoulders to keep his head completely still for ten minutes.

The radiation also burned his tongue and the roof of his mouth until he couldn't eat.

"Even water from the tap would burn my mouth," he said. He had to add baking soda and salt to tolerate water, and after four weeks on formula, he started watching the Food Network. "I would sit on the couch. I couldn't lay down," he said.

To survive, Borden focused on the time frame. "That's how I got through it. I'm going to get past seven weeks," he said.



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After finishing the radiation, undergoing chemotherapy, and losing 60 pounds, Borden began to recover.

"A month later, I could eat Jello, scrambled eggs, a little coffee," he said. "Life was looking up."

Borden returned to his job at Dassault Falcon Jet in May 2012. A few months later, he was back on the golf course. "I lost 20 yards on my drive, but hey, I'm hitting it," he said. He continued to eat soft, mild food for the rest of the year.

"Now I can eat whatever I want," he

said. "Food is a luxury to me now."

Borden's wife, Brenda, and their two sons, Scott and Tyler, showed him unconditional love and support during his treatments, as did his Dassault family. And in the future, Borden hopes to help someone else get through this treatment, particularly the last few weeks. He believes this experience has "rekindled" his outlook on life.

"I had intentions of living a good life before the diagnosis. I still want that," he said. "I'm grateful for every day."

With the recent addition of granddaughter McKynzi Renee, Borden and his wife Brenda have one more reason to be grateful.

"Being a husband, father and grandpa—that's what's important to me now," he said.