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THE BATTLE RAGES ON FOR GOYDEN

Former Liberty High School soccer coach has faced cancer head on since February



Mike and Janet Goyden celebrated their 43rd wedding anniversary in June with a meal at the Omelette Parlor. Courtesy photo

BY DANNY SUMMERS

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As an Air Force Academy graduate, F-4 fighter pilot, college professor, and former soccer coach for Liberty High School, Mike Goyden has had many accomplishments and faced a multitude of challenges over his 65 years. But his toughest battle is his fight against cancer.

On Feb. 8, Goyden was diagnosed with stage 2B non-Hodgkin's Burkitt's lymphoma. He spent a total of 55 days admitted in the hospital. Along the way he had major colon surgery that included the removal of a shotput-size tumor that grew in weeks, ten spinal taps for chemo to his brain, and six-rounds of 6-day round-the-clock in-patient chemotherapy. He also lost 45 pounds.

"At 64 I was diagnosed borderline pre-diabetic, and at 65 I became a 15 percent higher risk, so losing the weight was a blessing," Goyden said with a smile.

Anyone who knows Goyden is well aware that he has a positive outlook on life. Whether that was coaching his players, working in his various careers, or simply relishing the everyday adventure of life, he looks at things a little differently than most.

“I told my mom, ‘I think God knew somebody in our family was going to get cancer and he chose dad,’” said Goyden’s youngest daughter Kelly. “He knew he could handle it. Most of us would have fallen apart, but dad is so optimistic.”

Mike Goyden is a pillar in the soccer community; local and state. During his tenure at Liberty as the school’s boys and girls soccer coach from 1997-2012, he was a Colorado High School Soccer Coach of the Year several times and National Soccer Coaches Association of America Regional Coach of the Year and National Finalists three times. He led the boys to six state finals, winning it all three times. His 2004 squad finished the season ranked 8th in the nation.

But you rarely hear Goyden brag about those accomplishments. His focus is on giving thanks for the things in his life that have blessed him.

“Faith, family, friends ... that is what is getting me through this,” he said after his final round of chemo in June. “God is within us 24/7 and has been there for me throughout this process.”

Goyden often turns to verses from the Bible, like Joshua 1:9: “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

“Mentally I am as strong as when this all started, and I have stayed positive throughout,” Goyden said. “Now physically my body needs time to catch up and heal to stay up with my heart and mind.”

Goyden has many quiet conversations with God daily.

“One night while in the hospital post colon surgery recovery, I was at a very peaceful place and I said to God, ‘Please get me through this. I know you won’t give me anything more than I can handle, if I cannot handle it take me,’” Goyden said.

Goyden has had many tough days since February. Among the things that helped him enjoy everyday life was watching World Cup soccer games with his family and friends. In June, he and his wife, Jan, celebrated their 43rd wedding anniversary with a wonderful meal at the Omelette Parlor on the way back from the cancer clinic.

“Mike is the kind of guy that if you tell him to walk three times down the hall and back, he’ll do it six times,” Jan said.

Prior to the cancer diagnosis, the Goydens had a family vacation scheduled for Disney World in June. But when it became apparent that was not going to happen, they made adjustments.

“The kids (the Goydens have three children and six grandchildren) said, ‘We’ll wait for Poppy to get better and we’ll go another time,’ Jan said. “So now we’re going in November.”

Mike and Jan are also planning a week just for themselves in Hawaii in October at a Disney resort.

Jan is a woman of strong faith, but she admits it has been difficult to see her husband go through a life- threatening experience.

“There have been times I couldn’t even talk,” she said. “It was just really hard. Even now I get emotional thinking about it. You hate to see someone you love going through that.”

The next big day circled on Mike’s calendar is Aug. 21. That is when he will have his PET scan. Positron-emission tomography is a nuclear medicine functional imaging technique that is used to observe metabolic processes in the body as an aid to the diagnosis of disease.

His PET scan is being delayed until that time so any inflammation from the mucositis will be gone and not inversely affect the PET scan results.

“At this point in time I feel reassured knowing that I have done everything I can to battle this cancer with the max chemo that one could tolerate at my age,” Mike said. Based on that, my doctor is confident we will see good results.”

Some of the long-term side-effects remaining that still affect Mike are neuropathy of the fingers and toes which may or may not clear up after a year.

“I am still able to type, which means I can still teach online, but my handwriting is even worse than it was before,” Mike said with a chuckle. “I have some slurred speech right now due to sores in my mouth and throat from the mucositis, and it really does hurt to talk and swallow. Since I have always slurred some of my words anyway, being from New Jersey, now can blame it on mucositis.”

– Danny Summers / Pikes Peak Newspapers