



FEATURE STORY

# COURAGE AGAINST CANCER



*Bob Kaufman*



**BOB KAUFMAN, TxDOT CHIEF**

**COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING**

**OFFICER. MARTY SMITH, CHILDRESS**

**DISTRICT ENGINEER.**

**TWO MEN, ONE ENEMY: CANCER.**

**A**t first glance, the two men don't seem to have a lot in common. Kaufman comes from a background of hard-hitting news gathering in Washington, D.C., and high-profile communications for one of the world's largest computer companies. He works at TxDOT's headquarters in Austin. Smith comes from a background of practical engineering and grew up in the small town of Childress. He has worked for TxDOT for 28 years in the rural Childress District.

But they found they did have some things in common – non-Hodgkin lymphoma and courage in the face of very personal and private battles against the disease.

Non-Hodgkin lymphoma – or NHL, as it's often called – is cancer that begins in the lymph system in white blood cells. When these cells become abnormal, the body is left essentially defenseless against infection or disease.

It can start almost anywhere in the body: a single lymph node, a group of lymph nodes or an organ such as the spleen, as in Kaufman's case, or the stomach as it was with Smith. It can spread to almost any part of the body, including the liver and bone marrow.

Kaufman was diagnosed with Stage IV NHL in January 2009. At just 48 years old, he was facing the battle of his life.

He began six months of intensive chemotherapy in Austin and was proclaimed clear of the disease in June 2009. Kaufman's worst fears were realized, however, later that same year when he was again diagnosed with NHL. This time, he chose the most "impactful" option available.

In July 2010 he took a leave of absence from his job at Dell to commit himself fully to the battle. Surrounded by and with encouragement from his family and in-laws, Kaufman checked himself into M.D. Anderson in Houston. For 100 days, he attacked the disease with everything he had, and on July 14, 2010 – which Kaufman affectionately calls his "second birthday" – he received a stem cell transplant from a 22-year-old male donor.

Kaufman later met that man in California in 2012. He described the meeting as very moving and emotional, and it provided him with the opportunity to express his gratitude to the stranger who saved his life.

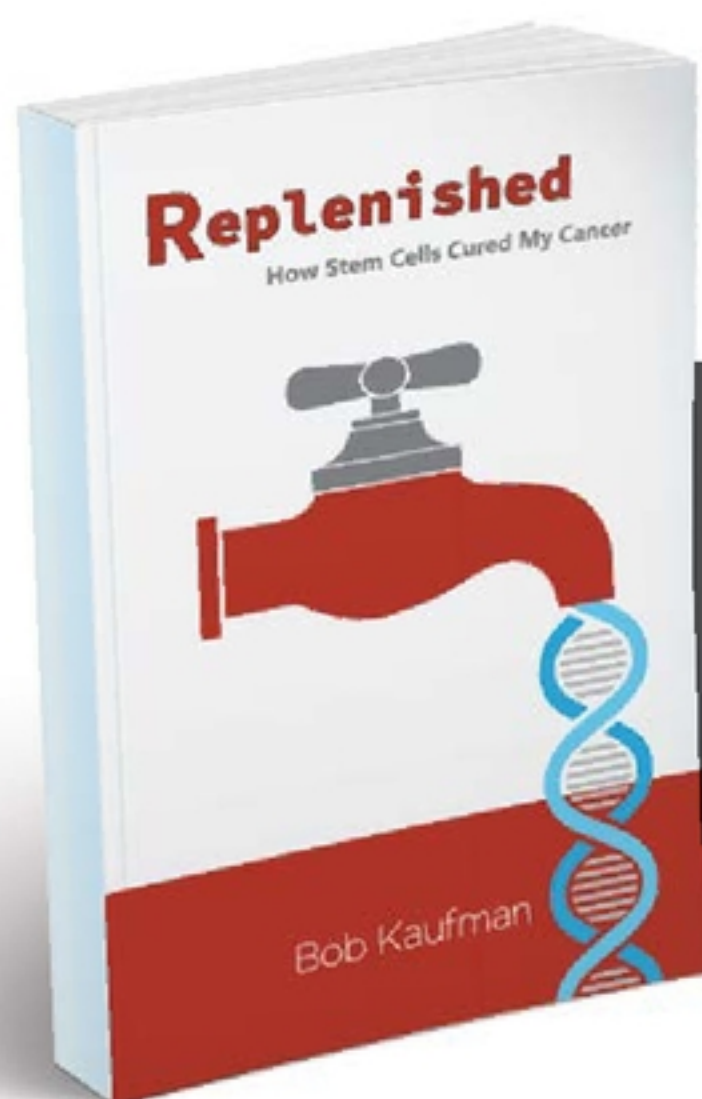
July of this year marked Kaufman's fifth anniversary of living cancer-free. To celebrate the milestone, but more importantly to give back to those who gave so much to him, he authored and published the book "Replenished – How Stem Cells Cured My Cancer." Upon its release in July, the book was

No. 1 on Amazon's Hot New Releases list in Motivational Growth & Spirituality.

In putting pen to paper, Kaufman described his experiences to help others endure the battle against cancer. His hope, he says, is that the book will help alleviate the fear of the unknown and ease the apprehension and anxiety that can overwhelm someone in such a vulnerable condition. He wanted to empower other patients with the knowledge of what to expect in their fight against cancer. He also wanted to encourage other patients to explore all options, and let them know that there is always hope.

"During my fight, I learned that there is no replacement for hard work and a good attitude means everything. If I can help one patient, it will be worth the time and effort," said Kaufman.

His intentions are for the book to be placed in resource centers at M.D. Anderson, including the hospital's library, select waiting rooms and anywhere else the book can serve as a source of comfort, hope and encouragement.




*Kaufman has written a book, "Replenished – How Stem Cells Cured My Cancer," to give back to those who supported him during his cancer treatment. The book is available on Amazon.com.*

As a result of his experience, Kaufman gained perspective and a greater appreciation of what is most important in life – family, friends and colleagues. "Life is short; make the most of it and live a grateful life."

By 2013, Kaufman had been working for TxDOT for a year at the Austin Headquarters, not knowing that some 370 miles away a colleague would soon be facing a similar battle. In October of that year, Marty Smith was attending the TxDOT Maintenance Conference when he started having stomach pains. After visiting the doctor, he was prescribed Nexium, but it wasn't helping the pain. Even at a double dose, he was still having trouble. The doctor suspected it was his gall bladder.

**Continued on page 18**



A man with grey hair and a mustache, wearing a red polo shirt, black trousers, and sunglasses, is captured in the middle of a golf swing on a lush green golf course. He is holding a golf club with both hands. The background shows a line of trees under a clear sky.

## Marty Smith

*After treatment for cancer, Smith was able to enjoy golfing again. Smith says the Childress community surrounded him with love and support and former Deputy Executive Director John Barton texted him every day.*

*Continued from page 17*

**IN JANUARY 2014, SMITH  
HAD HIS FIRST COMPUTERIZED  
TOMOGRAPHY SCAN  
OR CT SCAN.**

**T**he bad news was that the doctors found a dark spot on his stomach. After having a biopsy, Smith was diagnosed with Stage IV, aggressive, NHL. He received the lymphoma diagnosis on February 10, 2014. He was 53 years old and like Kaufman, was battling for his life.





TxDOT photo

*Like Kaufman, Childress District Engineer Marty Smith was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma. He underwent chemotherapy in 2014.*

Smith first saw an oncologist at the Don and Sybil Harrington Cancer Center in Amarillo. He took a class on chemotherapy and began reading about what to expect from the treatments. On Feb. 27, 2014, Smith received his first chemotherapy treatment. The treatments continued every three weeks for a total of six sessions.

Smith had his last chemotherapy treatment on June 13, 2014. That July 20, he had his first positron emission tomography scan, or PET scan. It indicated he was cancer-free. At his three-month checkup, another PET scan again showed no

signs of the cancer. At that time, he was told he could pick up his favorite hobby again, golf.

The Childress community surrounded him with love and support during his illness. He received get-well cards daily and was included on many prayer lists. Smith said that these acts of kindness and caring “build up your strength.” Smith did not require any additional medications or radiation.

When asked if someone stood out as being particularly supportive, Smith said, “Mr. (John) Barton. He sent me a prayer text every day. He didn’t miss a single day from February 10 through the middle

of July.” Barton recently retired as TxDOT’s deputy executive director.

When asked what he learned from this experience, Smith said, “Keep your head up. Keep a positive attitude and realize you’re not through living yet!”

Two men who seemingly had little in common now have a special bond and a common trait – courage in the face of cancer and ultimate victory over it.

Kaufman again enjoys an active life, exercising with his wife, Lisa. As recommended by his doctors, Smith is playing golf again and feeling great. 