



Bright Light Foundation

Donovan (Don) Wayne Holman

2013 BLF Recipient



My name is Donovan Wayne Holman (just call me Don). I was named after a very good high school friend of my Dad's who was killed in World War II. I was born May 30, 1946 in Dodson, MT. I have two brothers and three sisters. I grew up on my family farm/ranch near Malta, Montana and began my hard work ethics and the age of five. We all had to help

out, I already knew what I liked and that was operating all the equipment and seeing how things ran. I went to elementary school and High School in Malta. I enlisted into the Navy on Dec. 27th, 1964. I was an aviation mechanic stationed in Corpus Christi, Texas until Dec. 27th, 1968 when I was honorably discharged. I returned home to Malta, Montana and worked construction & drove truck until I met my wife Billie Rae a hometown girl & we married on March 24th, 1972.

Her father had his own Construction Business and so I began to work in the family business. We built roads, pits, reservoirs, mining leach pads and did trucking hauling bentonite(a local commodity native to our area) and coal. I took over the business after my father-in-law retired. I then integrated into the Gas & Oil side of things for the past 30 years. Building well sites, hauling pipe, crude oil and maintaining roads leading into the well sites and during our harsh winters and snow. I also pursued my passion of flying and was able to get my pilots license and have a small airplane that I used to fly to job sites around Montana and use for a parts runner significantly minimizing down time on the job. The past 2 years I have been working in the Bakken Oil Field of eastern Montana hauling scorio for the roads and well sites and hauling crude oil, and as of late when things had slowed down I had been hauling hay out of Canada (50 miles to the border north of Malta) during 2012 & 2013 because of drought conditions in the southern area of Montana.



Bright Light Foundation

In June of 2001 a tumor was found on my tonsil. Upon having a biopsy it was found to be a malignant tonsillar carcinoma. The tonsil was removed along with some feelers and a stringer that started to go down my throat. After that they gave me seven weeks of very intense radiation at the Cancer Center in Billings, Montana. The radiation killed the cancer along with my saliva glands and caused ongoing teeth decay and receding gums with periodontal disease. I still cannot produce much saliva hastening the decay of my teeth because of lack of natural cleaning effects. I was unable to work for four months and had a lot of expenses from the time spent away plus the rapid expense of treatments and all that went with this time. We got loans to handle the bills and continued to forge on.

In May of 2004 I began to have heart disease which resulted in two stints being put in as an emergency from blockages I had. I went in again in 2005 having to have another one put in. In July of 2007 I had to have open heart surgery with two 100% blockages. I lost several months off and on throughout this time recuperating from these procedures.

On July 21st, 2008 our only son Matt was killed in a vehicle accident. He was 29 years old. We were devastated. But, we knew that we must go on and we emerged ourselves in work. Then in December of 2011 I was diagnosed with a myxofibrosarcoma on the right mandible in my lower jaw. This tumor was locally aggressive and destructive and had grown to a significant size at the time of presentation. On Jan 27, 2012 I was taken to the operating room (Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, WA. Dr. Jasjit Kaur Dillon) and had a radical resection of the lower jaw bone and much of the surrounding soft tissue. Recovery from this kept me in the hospital until Jan 3, 2012 and was discharged to go home with a feeding tube and my jaws wired shut. I required subsequent post-operative follow-ups, both with the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery team (the team who removed the tumor) and the Otolaryngology team (the team who would later reconstruct the mandible).

On April 2, 2011 I returned to the operating room(at the University of Washington Dr. Neal Futron) for a 17 hour surgery to reconstruct the defect in the jaw that was created when the tumor



Bright Light Foundation

was removed. A portion of my fibula, a bone in the leg, was used to reconstruct the jaw and soft tissues from the leg were used to reconstruct the tissues of the mouth. A titanium rod was put in place to model a jaw. I was hospitalized until 4/11/2012 whereupon I was again discharged with a feeding tube. I went to Great Falls, Montana to Dr. Steven Whitney an oral surgeon who had initially done my biopsy, he took out stitches and did my checkups so I would not have to drive the 1,000 miles to Seattle. I returned to Seattle in Dec. 2012 to another surgery to debulking of the right mandible reconstruction site at the University of Washington to try to help create his face & neck to a more natural state. We made 8 trips to Seattle 1000 miles from Malta, requiring fuel, lodging and loss of work for myself and for my wife. This has been a tremendous financial burden to me. I have not been able to work like I had in the past. We have had ongoing medical bills for the past 15 years or more and have drained savings and retirements and are trying hard just to keep current let alone all of the payments we are making to all the medical facilities and doctors and maxing out our credit cards. It is a tremendous stress to both my wife and I.

We need to return to Seattle for oncological follow-ups for the next five years in order for them to keep diligent on the high risk of more tumors showing up somewhere else in my body. That is the nature of the last cancer I had. I will also be steadfast with guarded optimism. I believe in the fact that I have many guardian angels looking after me and know for sure my constant angel is my Son Matt. God Bless you all for you continued support to those in need not just myself.