



Bright Light Foundation

Wayne Bernard

2013 BLF Recipient



Wayne was a rich mixture of the old and the new. He was born on Bayou Lafourche in the little town of Lockport in 1939. Wayne's early years were hard. Having to help support his widowed mother left little time for idle hobbies. He started working in the oilfield industry as an offshore worker in the 1950s and continued for the next 50 years in sales and safety and environmental careers.

Wayne started having difficulties with swallowing in October 2012 and after tests was diagnosed with esophageal cancer. The cancer was a stage I and the PET scan showed no evidence of cancer elsewhere. His doctors were optimistic that this cancer could be successfully treated with radiation and chemotherapy and he could enjoy many more years. Unfortunately this was not the case. After 7 weeks of chemotherapy and radiation he was unable to swallow any food. He was given fluids and hospitalized repeatedly for weakness and debility. After a loss of 60 pounds over a period of weeks it was decided to place a feeding tube in his stomach for nutrition. After this procedure and the continuous administration of liquid food, an attempt at physical rehabilitation was begun with a home health physical therapist. After a period of time he developed chest pain and had difficulty breathing. Upon entering the hospital yet again, he was diagnosed with bilateral pulmonary embolisms and placed in intensive care. He was discharged a week later with an optimistic prognosis.

Several weeks after this he, again, started having trouble breathing and he was admitted into the progressive care unit at Denton Regional Medical Center. His lungs had become stiff and he had developed pneumonia in both lungs. Following this diagnosis, an aggressive treatment of antibiotics, steroids and breathing treatments were administered over a period of 3 weeks. His lungs were showing a slight improvement so the decision was made to transfer him to a critical care rehabilitation unit with the hope he would continue to improve and be able to tolerate some physical therapy. On the second day after his



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transfer, his oxygen levels dropped significantly and the only course was to anesthetize him and place him on a ventilator. His lungs continued to stiffen, and after fighting for three weeks, the prognosis was that he had little chance of survival. The decision was made to withhold medications and just make him comfortable. After about 12 hours, Wayne died peacefully surrounded by his family.