



Jim Morrison

His wife and his friends call him Jimbo. A straight-talking, down-to-earth, blue-collar man's man, he has an extraordinary story to tell.

Born to a Navy family in San Diego in 1953, Jim Morrison moved with his parents to Fresno during California's construction boom. In Mr. Oak's 9th grade English, he sat behind a cute girl who helped him get through class. "I couldn't spell then, and I can't spell now," he says. "I walked her home one day, and we've been together ever since." He and Sandi have been married for 36 years, with a daughter and a son.

He found his calling in the heating and air conditioning trade. He worked as a cook in the mornings, and attended trade school in the afternoons and evenings. He went from apprentice to top technician and plied his trade for 25 years. He's known as a guy who sometimes swims upstream against the flow. "As a Christian man, I

read Romans Chapter 12 and it says do not conform to this world," he says. "If that means rocking the boat occasionally, well, that's what the Lord did during his time on Earth, too."

He had always been interested in Coeur d'Alene, which he'd spotted on his way to hunting and fishing trips with a buddy in Montana. "Every time I drove through town, I said 'Someday, this is where I'm going to be.'"

He moved to town in 1992 and opened Comfort Heating and Air in 1993.

Jimbo has been an outdoorsman all his life. And so those close to him knew it wasn't like him to cut a trip short. In 2004, he was hunting goose and duck on a bitter January day on Lake Coeur d'Alene. He felt lousy, and it had been a tough week at work. Sandi drove him to the hospital. After the tests came back, he got the worst news possible.

"My personal family doctor came into the room, crying. That's never a good sign. She said 'You're really sick. Your body is shutting down, we're losing you. If we don't bring you back, you have two hours to live.'"

A tumor in the top of his left lung had spread to the membrane around his heart. That sac was full of fluid, as were his lungs. The diagnosis was stage 4 lung cancer. He'd never smoked a cigarette in his life, but when he started working in air conditioning in the 1970s, he says, "we were in asbestos knee high every day."

"With my family in the room, I said 'What do you think?' The doctor told us that if the chemo worked, I had maybe a year and a half. If not, six months."

Then began the hardest time of his life. He was in the ICU for two weeks, battling every day. His trauma was eased by reading his Bible, by the presence

of his family and the team of medical professionals around him at Kootenai Health. Dr. Robert Burnett removed the top third of his lung along with the tumor. Dr. Antoine Sarkis performed another surgery. Other specialists guided him along the difficult path of chemotherapy.

At some point, Kootenai Cancer Center's Dr. Haluk Tezcan said he'd outlived every statistic on an advanced case of the disease. "Nobody's ever been here before," the doctor told him.

From two hours to live, then maybe six months, it's now been five amazing years of life for Jim Morrison. "When I first got sick, we'd been planning my daughter's wedding," he says. "I thought I'd never live to see her walk down the aisle. Then I was so grateful for that, but thought I'd never see my grandson born. And now I have three grandkids. What am I grateful for? Oh boy, what am I not grateful for?"

Inspiring Life Stories

THEY SURVIVED A BRUSH WITH DEATH THANKS TO THE CARE OF SOME OF COEUR D'ALENE'S TOP MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS. TODAY, THEY CELEBRATE LIFE THAT IS ALL THE SWEETER.

"My doctors were amazing. And all the wonderful nurses... Wow, you can't even imagine the effort and the compassion they showed. All of these people have been a part of this miracle that God has allowed to happen."

He was taking his wife to lunch one day at a local diner when he recognized Dr. David York, a physician in Kootenai Health's ICU, the guy who'd pulled the fluid from his lungs. He couldn't resist going over to the doctor's table and pouring out his thanks. "There we are in front of the whole restaurant, and here's a heating guy thanking this doctor for saving my life, and for letting me be with my family and my grandkids." By the time he was finished, there wasn't a dry eye in the place.

"Being human, we take everything for granted - our wives, our families, our jobs," Morrison says. "But we are so fragile. I preach to anyone who wants to

hear it, don't take anything for granted, especially life, especially the grace that God gives us. If just one person with cancer hears my story, if it gives them this touch of hope, that light at the end of the tunnel... You got to have that will, man. You've got to have that desire, and you've got to be stronger than the cancer. I just pray they get that mustard seed of faith."

For the man they call Jimbo, every day feels like a gift. He takes a blood thinner injection every night, and sees his doctor every two months for a blood marker and a CT scan.

"I live my life those two months at a time now. In those months, I'm going to do whatever I can do to help others," says the man who came back from the brink.

"In this world, in these times, we need a miracle. I guess I'm living, walking proof. I'm here. You can walk up and touch me, and you're touching a miracle."