

# CANCER

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Grady had the choice of receiving treatment at NCMH, Duke or Roswell Park Hospital in Buffalo, N.Y. Fried recommended Roswell because it was the hospital with the highest survival rate for cancer patients. There, Grady's doctor was Claude Merrin, a specialist in urologic oncology.

Merrin recommended treatment with experimental drugs and aggressive surgery. "He was fairly honest about the treatment," Grady said. "I would have gone through with it, even if I had known the details because I had no choice. But he sure would scare off a lot of people if he came anywhere close to explaining the treatment."

**A**T THIS point, Grady said, he still felt no pain. His treatment would consist of chemotherapy, surgery and another year and a half of chemotherapy. He was told the main drug he would be taking had immediate side effects of nausea, vomiting and hair loss. He was given thiorazine, a drug used to calm psychotic patients, to counteract the effects of the main drug. "The thiorazine did nothing for me," he said.

Grady was given cis-platinum, a heavy metal with anti-tumor properties through an intravenous drip. The drug was, at that time, still experimental, and the government paid for that part of his treatment.

At the time of his experimental treatment, the cis-platinum treatment cost about \$1,400 each. Grady received the cis-platinum once a week for six weeks and then once every three weeks for two years. The drug is not experimental anymore; it cost patients about \$100 a treatment. It is called platinol and is being promoted in medical journals as the new wonder drug.

Grady said he was fortunate because some of the surgery and his drugs were experimental and the government, the American Cancer Society and the state of New York bore the brunt of much of the cost. His total treatment cost about \$50,000, most of which was the cost of the drugs, and therefore, free treatment. The student Blue Cross/Blue Shield

*"If I could make everyone who smokes have chemotherapy for one hour, there would be no more smokers."*

Grady Ballenger

insurance program paid about \$10,000, and Grady still owes the rest.

"The big expenses were nursing care and transportation, money you have to pay right away. But Rosewell Park was very generous about payment plans. And I've been encouraged by NCMH not to worry about it. The only pressure I receive is from the computer."

Grady said the student infirmary was a real godsend for him because the room there and many of the lab services were free.

"But no one should avoid treatment because they can't afford it—I still think no one will be turned away. Dying from cancer can be expensive too, and you don't get anything from it."

Grady was paying for treatment that made him miserable.

"There's no way to explain the agony to someone who hasn't been there. It takes everything you've got just to go in for the treatment."

"I puked my guts out for the entire time for the treatment. You could get nauseated just thinking about it. The day before the treatment was the worst."

Patrick, Grady's Roswell roommate, told Grady he used to hide in strange places hoping no one would



find him to take him to the hospital for treatment. "He said he used to hide behind a winged-back chair and cry to avoid going to the hospital."

Patrick had the same disease and treatment program as Grady.

Visitors sometimes are a problem rather than a help for patients undergoing chemotherapy treatment. The day before treatment the patient is anxious. The day after, he usually is sick, Grady said. "A lot of times you just can't be social when you're undergoing chemotherapy."

"Visitors sometimes came to the hospital and it was agony for me just to tell them to go away, which sometimes was all I could handle. . . I amazed myself sometimes that I could do anything."

**G**RADY said he took the treatment like it was a marathon. He prepared for it the day before by not eating anything, taking only liquids. During the treatment, "you don't ask about the time because it goes so tortuously slow."

Grady received intensive treatment with a number of drugs for six weeks. "I had wonderful veins before all this," he said. "Near the end, they had to start using the veins in my feet."

At one treatment, a minute portion of the medicine infiltrated tissue in his arm and caused a horrible chemical burn from his wrist to his elbow. "We were surprised because we didn't think this medicine was very strong—it didn't even make me very sick."

Grady said he didn't know how anyone could make it through the treatment without someone by his side. "Katherine was great," he said. "She was there the whole time." He said she only came close to passing out once, when he underwent lymphangiogram, a test to find affected lymph nodes. The doctor cuts into the foot, finds a lymph node and pumps in dye which detects infected lymph nodes. "The doctor asked her if she wanted to watch. She didn't know what was going on, so she came in. The doctor pulled out a lymph node to show her and she started swooning. They had to take her out."

After six weeks of intensive chemotherapy, doctors could find no further spread of the cancer. They decided to operate. At Roswell, the operation is done, Grady said, "in one fell swoop." Several surgical teams work 12-14 hours on the operation. The doctors removed all suspect tissue from Grady's body. After the operation, the X-rays showed only hundreds of metal clips, used as sutures and markers.

But the pain was not over. When the doctors expose the lungs to air, the lungs collapse and the patient has to learn to breathe again. After the operation, Grady had four tubes draining his lungs and was being given oxygen on a respirator. Grady was pulled off the respirator and the oxygen gradually so he could learn to breathe on his own. "That was a real pain," he said.

Grady left Roswell three months later. After he had been in Chapel Hill for about three months, Grady called Patrick to find out how he was doing. "His wife answered the phone and said Patrick had died the day before. I was shocked because I thought we were both home free. . . I didn't know him for a long time, but I knew him very well. I thought I'd heard everything Dr. Merrin had said to Patrick, and I thought maybe he had led Patrick on. But Merrin said he told Patrick he was

in a life-threatening situation. He would die, because you told me. He did say he told me. We asked him to be just reached that point and I

**M**ERRIN said one make it was because his lungs were in bad hand, had very healthy League soccer and had. The treatment has no smoking.

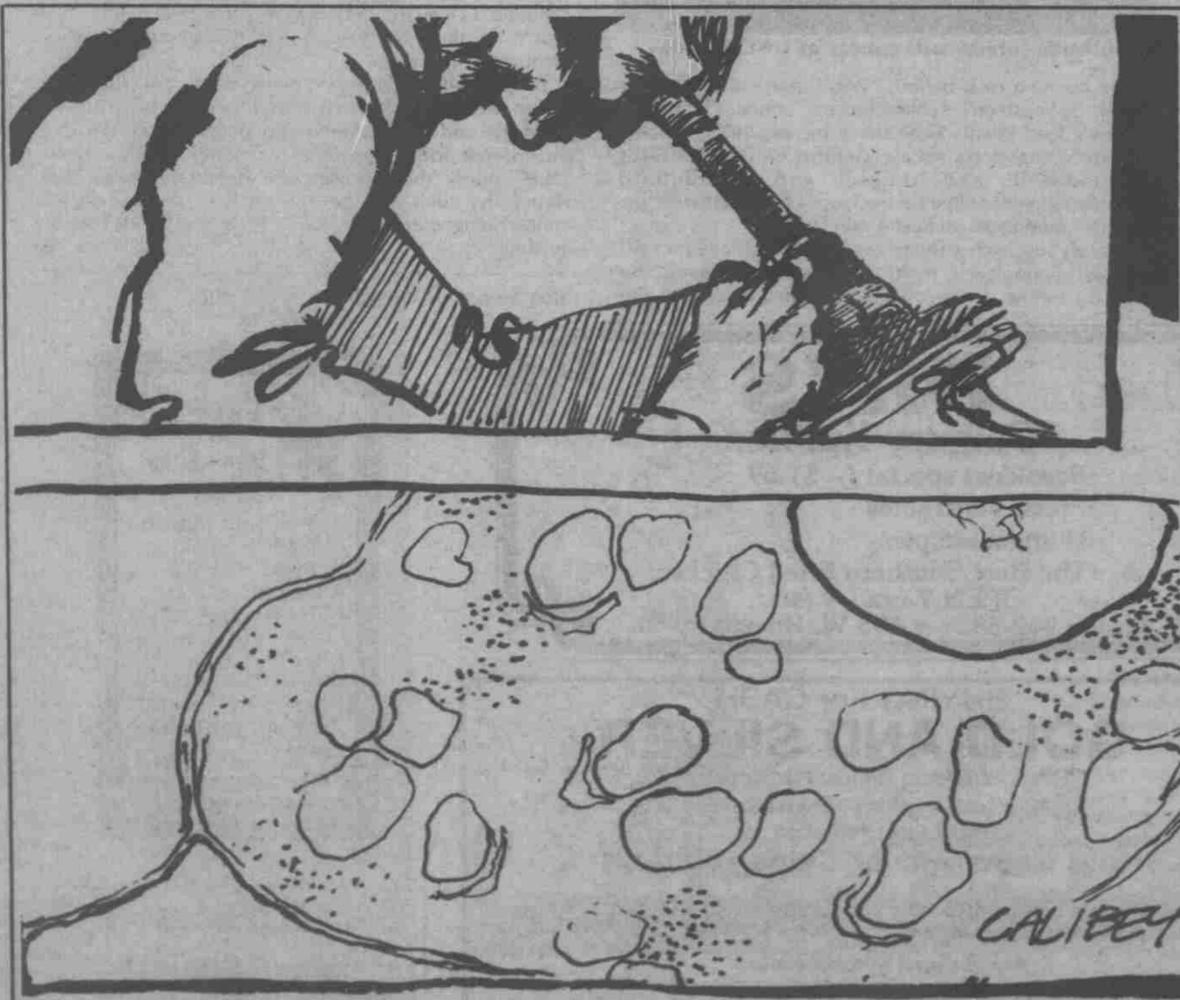
"If I could make everyone have chemotherapy for one hour, there would be no more smokers. One of the effects of chemotherapy is that when I see students taking the cigarettes out of their hands, I understand what they're

Grady also gets angry. "I get really mad at Mile Island happens and the public except the percent in 20-30 years of treatment and you know anything you could do going through that. The power is going to be in chemotherapy. Anyone who says chemotherapy would give the pain for someone else

By the time Grady was in treatment, he had lost a lot of weight and on July 4, 1978, he and Katherine moved from Buffalo to Chapel Hill.

"Coming home was really hard. I can't remember we got to our room. I hadn't seen in four months. I didn't remember me. It was

"But in another way it was good. I had to be sick in Chapel Hill. I was carrying a tennis racquet



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By MARTHA

**B**ESIDE must involve med nurses, who patients. Hill nurse special (cancer rese Hospital), we trains nurses

Wood said job is counse a clock-time "You give a l in other areas works 60 hou

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