

“Many people of faith have written about their personal cancer experience but very few caregivers have described their own struggle through this health minefield. Cyndi Siegfried writes with clarity and profundity as she unfolds her journey with doctors, her faith and the husband she loves, seeking the best healthcare possible while growing closer to her Lord on the way. This is a must read for caregivers starting down such a tortuous road with any serious illness.”

—Al Weir, M.D., oncologist  
Vice President of Campus and  
Community Ministries of The Christian Medical and  
Dental Associations, author of *When Your Doctor Has Bad News*

“Like millions of people around the world, I’ve watched close family members struggle with the terrible disease of cancer. Cynthia has written an inspirational book about her experience with the disease. The revelations she shares about her role as Jim’s caregiver will provide hope to anyone in the midst of an ordeal with cancer and someone they love.”

—Jason Sehorn  
analyst for CBS College Sports network, former defensive back  
for New York Giants and St. Louis Rams. Jason married  
Angie Harmon in 2001, following his proposal to her on the  
Tonight Show with Jay Leno.

“For years Cynthia Siegfried has undertaken a task no one wants to acquire: caregiver for a loved one with cancer. Now, the lessons she’s learned will ease your caregiving as she shares her practical pointers and God’s precious promises. If you need encouragement, I encourage you to read this book.”

—Lynn Eib  
cancer survivor, patient advocate  
and author of the bestseller *When God & Cancer Meet*

“Finally a book that addresses the caregiver. After my two cancer battles, I look back and wonder how my dear sweet husband did it.

How did he hold up under the pressure of taking care of me as well as my three boys? As a cancer survivor I know the support thrown our way was directed at me. But I know he needed support through prayer and friendship too. Talking about a crisis does help. Putting a book in print to help the caregiver is a wonderful idea!"

—Brenda Ladun, cancer survivor  
Birmingham newscaster, author of *Getting Better, Not Bitter*

# CANCER JOURNEY



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A CAREGIVER'S VIEW FROM THE PASSENGER SEAT

CYNTHIA ZAHM SIEGFRIED



*Cancer Journey*

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Jim,

My inspiration, my hero, my soul-mate, in  
sickness and health 'til death do us part.

Ashleigh, Tara, and Nicole,

If I had known how well you were going to turn  
out, I would have had three more.



# CONTENTS

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Introduction	xi
1. Kidnapped	1
2. A Jerky Start	15
3. On the Road	29
4. The Road to the Crazy House	41
5. A Detour—Exploring My Faith	49
6. Fuel for Body and Spirit—God's Provisions	59
7. Streams in the Desert	69
8. The Endless Journey	81
9. Running on Empty in the Valley of the Shadow of Death	93
10. Last Man Standing	103
11. Leaving a Roadmap	113
The Caregiver's GPS	125
Endnotes	129
Resources and Recommended Reading	135



# INTRODUCTION

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ON THE DAY my husband, Jim, was diagnosed with cancer, we began a journey that changed us forever. I was just a passenger, along for the ride, but I was profoundly affected by the illness. Being caregiver to a seriously ill person has problems different from, but equally as serious as, those of the patient. Unfortunately, support for the caregiver is often lacking.

Almost two million people in the United States will be diagnosed with cancer this year. Most will be cared for by family and friends. This book is for you—the husbands, wives, children, parents, and friends who are providing care for a loved one with a devastating illness.

I invite you to accompany me as I share the fears and joys, struggles and triumphs encountered on the ride of a lifetime. Hopefully, my map will provide a shortcut, taking you from the terror of diagnosis, through the fear of recurrence, and finally to a place of peace and acceptance.

## XII • CANCER JOURNEY

Jim frequently says cancer is harder on the caregiver than on the patient. I don't believe that for a minute. One thing, though, is certain. The view from the passenger seat is different, and bound to be more difficult—if you don't know the Driver!

## CHAPTER 1

# KIDNAPPED

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*If all the difficulties were known at the outset of a long journey, most of us would never start out at all.*

—Dan Rather

THE DAY STARTED like any other. The sun rose in the east. The morning paper landed in the drive. The alarm rang at seven. I fortified myself with a shot of Dr Pepper and set out for a morning walk through my quiet neighborhood. I didn't bother to turn around when the car pulled up behind me.

He grabbed me quickly, his arm around my neck, hand over my mouth. I fought and screamed to no avail as he threw me roughly into the back of the car. He only had to hit me once to get my attention. I stopped my futile struggling as he taped my wrists and ankles.

“Who are you? What do you want with me?” I cried.

He answered in a language I had never heard before. I had no idea where he was taking me or why.

“God help me,” I sobbed.

My cancer journey had begun.

We were at a good point in our lives.

Our three daughters were educated and happily married. We had five grandchildren and our youngest daughter, Ashleigh, and her husband, Chris, had just announced they were expecting their first baby. My husband, Jim, was at the pinnacle of his career in the brokerage industry. He had just been elected deacon chairman of our 15,000-member church. Neither of us had any health problems. We were happily ensconced in a beautiful neighborhood, living the American dream. We didn’t know the dream was about to become a nightmare.

On Friday, November 1, after a routine physical by a new internist, Dr. Mark Castellaw, the doctor reported that Jim’s cholesterol was a bit high, and that he saw a couple of spots he “didn’t like the looks of” on the chest X-ray. We weren’t too concerned about either finding. After all, the cholesterol could easily be controlled and the spots were probably artifacts or scar tissue from numerous respiratory infections during childhood. Jim was a runner and former college basketball player, had never smoked, and was feeling perfectly well. Just to be safe, the doctor scheduled an appointment for him to have an MRI the following week. We went on with business as usual.

For Jim, business as usual meant fifty-hour work weeks, lengthy church meetings, coaching our grandsons’