



McCade Miller's Story

By Ryan Daugherty

McCade Miller and his wife, Brooke, live just south of Abilene in a small town called Lawn. Together with their two daughters, ages 6 and 11, they are four of just a few hundred that live there.

For a living, Mr. and Mrs. Miller run a family-owned business, Miller Dirt Work, that centers around dirt work and building homes and roads. Additionally, they run a farm and ranch operation.

In April of 2017, Mr. Miller started having issues with his peripheral vision, something he had never experienced before. These issues would occur periodically in stages.

"My vision just wasn't right," says Mr. Miller. "It would kind of go on for 10 to 15 minutes at a time and then everything would just clear up and be fine; there was no pattern at all."

For a couple of weeks, these problems continued. Having difficulty seeing and experiencing blurred vision turned into random headaches and vomiting for no apparent reason. These occurrences led to Mr. and Mrs. Miller having to weigh a few options. Mrs. Miller, a registered nurse, recommended her husband go see a doctor to get an MRI.

On June 19, 2017, they visited a local neurosurgeon in Abilene who performed multiple MRI tests on Mr. Miller's brain. The results were not good; there was a tumor on his brain stem. The location of the tumor was too severe for a biopsy to be performed. However, another option was on the table.

"Our neurosurgeon said he knew enough about the tumor to where he could send me to a place that deals with similar cases all the time," says Mr. Miller. "It was actually at a place he had trained at, which was where he recommended we go. We already knew about how great and innovative the treatments were there so that's where we decided I needed to go."

Together, they would drive over 200 miles to UT Southwestern Medical Center where they would meet with Zabi Wardak, M.D., Assistant Professor of Radiation Oncology. Dr. Wardak specializes in the treatment of adult and pediatric brain and spinal tumors. He would bring Mr. Miller's case to the institution's multidisciplinary tumor board to discuss the best course of action. Mr. Miller's images showed causes for concern for being an aggressive primary brain tumor in a delicate location. Because of this, surgery was a high risk and the best option was radiation with concurrent chemotherapy.

When Dr. Wardak met with Mr. and Mrs. Miller, he went over all the details of his scans as well as the expected treatment plan. He explained the significant potential risks due to the location of the tumor and that the goal was to prevent further growth.

"It was a very challenging case," says Dr. Wardak. "The tumor was in a critical location that controls all the nerves for the face as well as the nerves that extend down to the spinal cord that control both the arms and legs."

return to Lawn for the weekend, and then repeat the process - over 400 miles round-trip. It wasn't what they wanted to do, of course, but through prayer and the comfort of each other they powered through it.



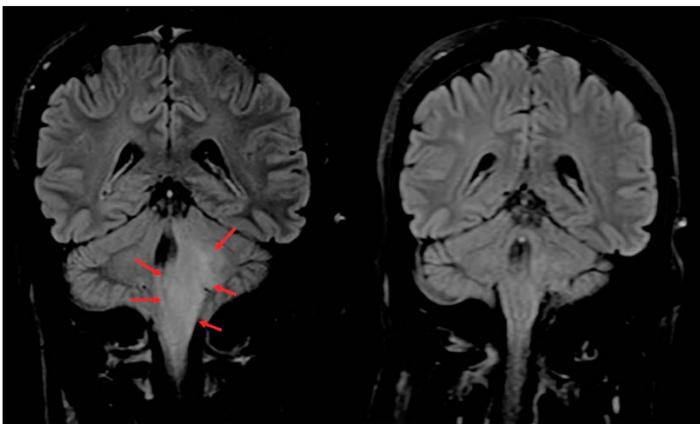
McCade Miller, his wife, Brooke, and his two daughters.

Mr. Miller recalls the treatments being fairly tolerable at the start, but fatigue was apparent and was a major factor toward the end when everything kicked into high gear. However, as for pain, there wasn't any.

On August 23, 2017, Mr. Miller finished his final radiation treatment. The following month he returned to UT Southwestern for his post-treatment MRI. To his and his wife's pleasure, the tumor had reduced well over half in size.

Nearly two years since undergoing treatment, Mr. Miller and his wife continue to visit UT Southwestern every 90 days. He continues to regain his strength back and his tumor has not only been controlled, but has responded significantly.

"Everything has been great and UT Southwestern is a great place to be where you know you are getting the best possible treatment," says Mr. Miller. "From the valet, receptionists, techs, nurses, doctors, and, of course, Dr. Wardak, it's all amazing. Over this journey we've never felt like we should go anywhere else."



Mr. Miller's pre-radiation scan (left) vs. 2 years after radiation (right)

On July 13, 2017, Mr. Miller started the first of 30 treatments. Each week, he and his family would drive to Dallas for treatment, stay in a hotel,