



PRESENTS

Heaven on Earth

In Loving Memory



AL COPELAND



The Beginning

In mid-October 2007, Al Copeland made a routine appointment with his doctor to discuss a strange, painless, flesh-colored lump that had recently appeared on the side of his neck. He was given antibiotics and sent home—having been misdiagnosed with a minor infection of the skin. However, the lump continued to grow, so Al sought a second opinion.

On November 8, 2007, Al Copeland sought his third and final opinion. This time, a biopsy was performed. The result seemed surreal to him—it was malignant. “It is in the Carcinoma family,” the doctor said on November 9. “We won’t know much more until the rest of the Pathology comes in.” Al Copeland was shocked.

Always the family man, Al Copeland gathered his five adult children for dinner that night. “Do you see this lump on my neck?” he asked his youngest adult daughter, “Well, baby, it’s a form of Cancer. And, I’m going to beat it. Don’t worry.” Unfortunately, Al Copeland was unable to keep that promise.

The Diagnosis


It took almost a week before Al Copeland and his family knew the true nature of the disease. It was Merkel Cell Carcinoma—a rare and little-discussed form of Skin Cancer that is four times more deadly than the much-publicized Melanoma. Since little was known about the disease, it took experts nearly a week to lay out a treatment plan.

Al Copeland pressed on. Determined to beat the Cancer, he underwent his first Chemotherapy infusion the day before Thanksgiving with his children at his side. Due to the aggressive nature of the disease, he underwent a second Chemotherapy treatment on Thanksgiving morning and a third the following day as two of his children cheered on the LSU Tigers with him in his hospital room.

The Illness

Approximately seven days after his last Chemotherapy treatment, Al Copeland was diagnosed with Chemotherapy-induced pneumonia. He was admitted to an Intensive Care Unit, and teetered between seriously ill and gravely ill for the thirty days that ensued. A family member was by his side at all times.

Christmas Day 2007 was a day of harsh reality for Al Copeland and his family. While he was improving, it was still necessary for Al to remain in that Intensive Care Unit. That meant he would miss Christmas.



He would be unable to watch the joy on people's faces as they passed his home. He would be unable to entertain thousands of friends with his legendary parties. And worst of all, Al Copeland would be unable to celebrate the joy and spirit of giving with his family.

Perhaps dejected more so by that fact than the diagnosis itself, Al Copeland begged Doctors to release him from the hospital. Of course, they could not.

On January 3, 2008, Al Copeland emerged from the hospital a severely weakened man. He was unable to continue Chemo due to the disastrous intolerance his body displayed toward the drugs. Al Copeland made plans to travel to California and eventually to Germany in a tremendous final effort to save his life.

"Christmas" 2008

In early January 2008, Al Copeland insisted upon having a family gathering to celebrate Christmas. All of his children, grandchildren and family were in attendance. Al was tired and weak, yet determined to carry on the war he was waging with his own body.

It was that evening that Al Copeland made his dying wishes known. "If I die," he said to his large family in an eerily silent room, "I want all of you to stay together. I want you to celebrate every holiday together and take vacations together. And, I want us to find a cure for this cancer."

Will do, Dad.

The Foundation

Two days later, Al Copeland was transported to the airport by ambulance. He headed to California to prepare his body for cutting-edge treatment in Germany. Sadly, we all know the rest. On March 23, 2008, Al Copeland lost his battle with Merkel Cell Carcinoma.

In March 2008, The Al Copeland Foundation was formed by his children. His youngest adult daughter serves as President. In his absence, she will see to it that her father's promise to beat the cancer can become a reality for other families. Two of his other children serve on the board. His other two adult children volunteer time as their schedules allow. Also, Al Copeland's younger children and many other family members are always there to participate in events and cheer on their older siblings.



The Mission

RESEARCH OF MCC – *The Al Copeland Foundation’s primary mission is to aid in research toward finding a cure for Merkel Cell Carcinoma. By working closely with experts in the fields of Dermatology and Oncology, the Al Copeland Foundation has learned that this goal is attainable in the near future.*

In fact, Dr. Chang and Dr. Moore at the University of Pittsburgh have made recent discoveries linking Merkel Cell Carcinoma (MCC) to a virus, Merkel Cell Polyomavirus (MCV). MCV is a benign virus that can mutate in a person’s body to develop malignant properties, therefore leading to MCC. In the very near future, given the funding, scientists may be able to develop a blood test to diagnose MCV and quite possibly a vaccine to protect against the virus.

AWARENESS OF MCC – *The Al Copeland Foundation is also dedicated to raising awareness of MCC among both the Medical Community and the general public. Since Merkel Cell Carcinoma only strikes approximately 1,500 people a year in the United States, there is a lack of consensus on the appropriate treatment regimen for this cancer among the medical community. In addition, most Doctors have never seen a case of MCC.*

Most people in the general public have never heard of Merkel Cell Carcinoma. However, the incidence of this cancer has tripled in the past ten years and is far more deadly than Melanoma, which is currently perceived as the most dangerous form of skin cancer. Beginning as a red or flesh-colored lump on the skin, MCC metastasizes rapidly to the lymph nodes, liver, lungs, brain, and bones.

GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY – *Merkel Cell Carcinoma is not the sole mission of the Al Copeland Foundation, however. The foundation is also dedicated to continuing the legacy of Al Copeland in giving back to the community. For instance, the tradition of the Secret Santa Program will be resurrected and live on. This program selects underprivileged children and provides them with unique and special gifts delivered by “Santa”. The Al Copeland Foundation also intends to aid patients and families bearing the burden of Cancer in whatever ways possible.*

ON A FINAL NOTE

The Al Copeland Foundation incurs as little expense possible in order to use the funds toward attaining its goals. The organization takes no profit. It is recognized by the IRS as a Non-Profit Organization (501c(3)). There are a great number of ways to get involved in these important causes. Volunteers are always welcomed, and no contribution is too small.



'Tis The Season



*R*emembering A Legacy...

*S*peeding Toward A Cure



MILLIONS OF LIGHTS WILL TWINKLE,
AS WE CULMINATE 35 YEARS OF CHRISTMAS JOY
SNOW WILL FALL NIGHTLY IN NEW ORLEANS,
HAPPINESS WILL ADORN FACES OF EVERY GIRL AND BOY
TOY SOLDIERS AND TRAINS WILL GLOW,
THE DISPLAY WAS CREATED WITH ADORING LOVE
A SHINING STAR WILL OVERLOOK THE NATIVITY
AS A VERY SPECIAL ANGEL WATCHES FROM ABOVE.
ALL OF THESE THINGS CAN MEAN ONLY ONE;
IN HONOR OF THE SOUL IN HEAVEN WE HOLD DEAR
CHRISTMAS WILL BE CELEBRATED "COPELAND STYLE"
IN NEW ORLEANS FOR A FINALE THIS YEAR
WE ARE ON A MISSION TO CURE THIS AGGRESSIVE DISEASE;
WE HOPE YOU WILL JOIN US IN OUR FIGHT
IN A TRIBUTE TO THE ONE WE LOVE AND MISS;
OUR GALA PROMISES TO BE A WONDERFUL NIGHT.



PLEASE JOIN US FOR

“Heaven on Earth”

TO BENEFIT THE AL COPELAND FOUNDATION

AND TO HONOR AL COPELAND

FOR 35 YEARS OF UNPRECEDENTED CHRISTMAS DISPLAYS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2008

7:30PM

5001 FOLSE DRIVE, METAIRIE, LOUISIANA

FEATURING VINCE VANCE AND THE VALLIANTS,

FLEUR DE LIS &

BLACKENED BLUES BAND

~ Enjoy Delicious Food from Al Copeland's Team of Chefs and Unlimited Premium Bar ~

ADMISSION \$100 PER PERSON

*(please bring a new, unwrapped gift for underprivileged/sick children
in order to receive a complimentary 50/50 raffle ticket)*

ALL PROCEEDS GO TO THE AL COPELAND FOUNDATION IN SUPPORT OF
MERKEL CELL CARCINOMA RESEARCH IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UNIVERSITY
OF PITTSBURGH MERKEL CELL CARCINOMA RESEARCH PROGRAM.

Party will include a silent auction and will feature sports memorabilia, jewelry, art, etc.
Don't miss our presentation of gifts to children.

**Sponsorships available. For more information email
Charli Womac at cwomac@alcopeland.com or call (504) 620-3727.**

**To purchase tickets visit www.alcopelandfoundation.org or call (504) 830-1000.
Limited Supply Available. Tickets purchased before 11/15/2008 discounted to \$80.**



Sponsor Options:

100.⁰⁰ Party Invitation

1,000

- 10 Invitations for the Christmas Party
- Company Recognition on Al Copeland Foundation Website

2,500

- 10 Invitations for the Christmas Party
- 4 Invitations for the Copeland Family Christamas Lighting Ceremony and Reception
- Company Recognition on Al Copeland Foundation Website and Sponsorship Recognition
- Company Recognition on Christmas Event Tshirt
- 10 Christmas Event Tshirts

5,000

- Reserved Table in the Main Tent
- Company Name on Reserved Table
- VIP Table Service
- 10 Invitations for the Christmas Party
- 6 Invitations for the Copeland Family Christamas Lighting Ceremony and Reception
- Company Recognition on Al Copeland Foundation Website and Sponsorship Recognition
- Company Recognition on Christmas Event Tshirt
- 10 Christmas Event Tshirts
- Onstage Recognition of Sponsor Partnership

10,000

- Limo Transport to and from the party (pick up and drop off)
- Up to 5 hotel rooms for the evening of the Christmas Party at the Best Western Landmark Hotel
- Sponsorship of the on stage gift presentation to a child at the party
- Reserved Table in the Main Tent
- Company Name on Reserved Table
- VIP Table Service
- 10 Invitations for the Christmas Party
- 6 Invitations for the Copeland Family Christamas Lighting Ceremony and Reception
- Company Recognition on Al Copeland Foundation Website and Sponsorship Recognition
- Company Recognition on Christmas Event Tshirt
- 10 Christmas Event Tshirts
- Onstage Recognition of Sponsor Partnership



Secret Santa

There was also Al Copeland's secret Santa program that went on for a number of years. "I want to give 1000 children a real Christmas," he said. "Santa and his elf should ring the doorbell after dark on Christmas Eve," he specified, "They must have a sack of presents, wrapped and labeled by name—a big gift and some small ones and a stocking for each child. The elf must have a camera, to take two photographs. One for the family and one for me."

That meant more than 3,000 gifts, 1,000 Christmas stockings, cameras, elves, and Santas complete with costumes. He inspected every gift, discarding some as not big enough, exciting, or special. An entire floor at Popeye's headquarters was dedicated to a massive corporate "wrap-a-thon" between Thanksgiving and the week before Christmas. The Knights of Columbus and Knights of Peter Claver identified the families by Catholic Parish, and provided a list of names, ages, addresses, and telephone numbers to call the families in advance.

Al refused media coverage for the event. He felt it would spoil the mystery of Santa Claus for children.


Please read on for more information on Al Copeland and his passion for the holidays...

A Christmas Story BY AL COPELAND (written December 2006)

When I was a little boy, we lived in the projects. One of the best things we ever did was to drive to see Christmas lights as a family. The most spectacular of all was on Canal Street, the Centanni home owner of Gold Seal Dairy. They lavishly decorated their house with lots of lights and a Santa toy factory complete with Santa and even a large life-size elephant. As a kid, I was taken back as I'm sure I had a gleam in my eye and a smile on my face. I remember saying "If I ever have the money, I will do this someday." That display ran for 29 years.

I quit school after finishing ninth grade at 16 because I couldn't afford it. I had to work. My first goal in life was to make sure I could always afford shoes for my kids. I knew many kids who didn't have them.

After founding Popeyes Famous Fried Chicken on June 13, 1972, building several stores and becoming


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successful, I bought my dream house at 5001 Folsom Drive. By the next Christmas, I started my own display of Christmas lights with a 15-foot Rudolph and 18-foot snowman. It was the first time anyone had ever seen figures so large, decorated with thousands of baby lights, as most people were using large candle shaped Christmas lights. Like magic, people hungry for Christmas lights and the family tradition of driving by to see them, thousands of cars passed by my house. I was so excited to see the gleam and smile on children's faces. I continued to increase the display in size with Santa Claus giving candy to kids and more than a million lights. More and more cars with people coming by to hear Christmas carols with families smiling and laughing.

And the neighbors wanted and loved the lights. Everything was awesome until one day, out of the blue, the grinch appeared in form of a lawyer neighbor with only two other people who complained: "Stop this traffic!" "We can't get home!" "People are peeing on our front yards!" Of course, I wasn't about to stop when everybody else in the neighborhood loved it, not to mention the thousands of people coming by. The newspaper and tv stations picked it up always looking for a good fight. The voices were so loud from the people who loved it that Sheriff Harry Lee stepped in. "My job is to protect and serve the people," he said and sent in the police like a mini Mardi Gras. One lane for the neighbors and only one lane of traffic, backed-up to Veterans Hwy, to orderly see the house. He totally managed the situation with mounted police strutting, ambulance on the scene and port-a-potties. Everyone was happy except the same three people.

The lawyer was upset because every year at Halloween he had decorated with large jack-o-lanterns, a band, and a block party. When the neighbors complained about him, he lost his right to continue. So, he served me. Imagine how the press picked up on that! Television stations and the newspapers... all at once... the national limelight. We were on Good Morning America, The Today Show, and the AP newswire; all were amazed.

We continued to light our display until one day, out of the blue, the Supreme Court came down with a ruling to notify me on Christmas Eve to take the lights down or go to jail. The ruling said, "after this year, you can continue to light the lights but in extreme moderation as long as it doesn't cause a traffic jam. Sheriff Harry Lee came by and said, "if you don't, I will have to arrest you." Decision time! Do I go to jail or take the decorations down? Sheriff Harry Lee said, "you have done nothing wrong so I will make sure you are comfortable. You can stay in my office." I replied, "thanks, but the whole idea was to gather families together and I don't want to be without mine on Christmas Day."


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So on that evening I took the lights down. Cranes, trucks and workers quickly removed the star from the top of my house and all other caricatures. All of this covered by the press. Amazingly, that night, hundreds of people came by singing Christmas carols and holding lit candles. Cars continued to pass all night long blowing horns. The people were clearly upset. The lawyer complained he was concerned for his life. All of this and more was so emotional it fueled my fire.

I was upset and ready to fight for the people. The next day a coalition of all the good neighbors came to my house. They said, "we want to help so we are calling our councilmen and other politicians. We want the lights back." We decided after researching the laws that as a group we could win. The neighbors adopted some of the figurines and displayed them in their own yards.

What if three people on St. Charles Avenue complained about Mardi Gras, would we stop and lose all that revenue for the city? The answer is no. The law must be wrong. So we all went to the Capitol as one voice. By this time, the Christmas lights have become a political football...you can understand the tension. I hired the best lobbyists we could find. We won in committee! We won hands down in House of Representatives. It was my first introduction into politics. And I was amazed to see how people could trade one thing in another area in the state for another and get the votes the way they want it. The opposing Senator lobbied as hard as my lobbyists did, and, in the end, we watched the votes click off in seconds. The decision was made. We lost by two votes in the Senate. Coming home, perplexed, still not understanding how according to the law three people on St. Charles Avenue might be able to stop Mardi Gras.

At that point, history changed. We toned down the lights at my house. By the next year, on December 5 as usual, we lit the display at my office building on Clearview Parkway across from the shopping center. This time, it was more magnificent than ever. We had seven and a half acres to decorate and plenty of room for orderly traffic. Laser beams on the walls and millions of Christmas lights decorated the five story building. A huge neon sign said "Merry Christmas You All" to welcome one and all. Santa flew in every night by helicopter. Tents with ice and snow for the kids to play in, a large sleigh with reindeer, popcorn, hot dogs, drinks and plenty of room on the property for people to stroll around. Since the building was closed at night, we had plenty of parking. Amazingly, the annual count saw license plates from all over the state. It was estimated over 400,000 people visited the display. I was absolutely amazed. And we decided it was actually better than before.

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This was the home office for Popeyes Famous Fried Chicken, which by this time, had grown from one unit to approximately two thousand throughout the world. With 54,000 employees throughout the system, the Christmas spirit was everywhere. Employees wanted to do more. I hesitate to mention this because it was top secret, but they deserve the credit now. And, believe it or not, nobody said a word. So, I had this idea what we would do.

We went to 50 churches and the poorest areas of town. We asked priests to give us a list of five families that couldn't afford Christmas. You know...good, church-going, hard-working people trying to make ends meet. We asked them for the names, gender and age of their kids and to provide us with two reliable people that could play Santa Claus and his helper. After gathering this information, we took it back to the office where I had purchased thousands of toys that the office staff could wrap and label on their own time.

We decided what toys to provide to Santa so that on the night of Christmas Eve at a specific time, they would all start to deliver them. Simultaneously, in fifty different neighborhoods, a live Santa with his helper surprisingly appeared at their doors armed with a big sack of toys with all presents wrapped and named for each child and a Polaroid camera. The helper was to take two pictures. One for the family so that they could believe that this actually happened. And one for the office so the staff could see that their donated labor made people really happy.

This new tradition went on for about five years. Although the good neighbors were still disappointed, I continued to increase the light display at home for them year after year simultaneously as long as we didn't violate the law with traffic.

At this point, I received a call from state officials saying that they would like for me to decorate the State Capitol on behalf of all the soldiers who were drafted from Louisiana into the armed forces and were lost in Desert storm. I was more than willing to help. So I moved the entire display to the State Capitol and decorated all the trees with bright colorful lights and filled the lawns with brightly-lit characters. The building itself was decorated with Christmas lights all the way to the top. It was a spectacle.



I was invited to the ceremony where most of the members in office were there. The Marines band played. The Governor, several state officials and dignitaries of the armed forces spoke and honored me. I was in tears and extremely emotional. At this point, everyone was happy. The neighbors were happy because the lights were brighter than before and traffic was organized. It was almost as if the people understood not to disturb the neighborhood. People still loved it!

From that point on, I continued to put the lights up year after year at my home. I was thinking about selling my house because I had moved across the lake and didn't see any reason to keep the house except for the Christmas lights. In fact, I lit it for two years without living in the house more than two weeks a year. I decided to find a permanent home for my lights. Although many areas wanted them, I thought it best to leave them in the parish of Jefferson where they were always home. So I met with Aaron Broussard, several councilmen and Harry Lee and made a deal to decorate Lafreniere Park. Everything seemed to be on track for signing a thirty-year agreement for the Al Copeland Family Christmas display to continue.

That is except for the unfortunate, unbelievable tragedy for our city and its people called Katrina. After that devastation, it was a very minute problem but the park was then used for a dump full of trees and debris in this terrible time although Doc Surgenor who has been responsible for erecting the lights for many years and I thought it would a gleaming ray of sunshine by whatever help we could find. We actually made it happen so we would not have missed a year.

Unfortunately, due to all the disarray and the fact that our last display was entitled, "Aloha" meaning "Hello and Goodbye" from its original home to a new home at Lafreniere Park. People may have been confused. The turn-out was not what we expected. So this year, Aaron Broussard and the officials have agreed to sign the deal and begin in January to make it ready for the displays next year and to celebrate thirty more to go. The lighting should be as usual on December 5, 2007 by the grace of God and without a hitch.

I invite you all to visit my home for the last year and to celebrate my vision as a young boy which has now become a family tradition for one and all.

Al Copeland



*Remembering a Legacy...
Speeding Toward a Cure.*



THE AL COPELAND FOUNDATION

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SPONSORSHIP, DONATIONS

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