



## Who is God When Life Stinks?

### “Butt-pushers”

Everyday kept bringing challenges and changes. There were tiny steps forward and often steps back. The whirr of the dialysis equipment was present every other day now, instead of twenty-four hours a day. Finally, the extra large IVC (intra vena cava) filter was inserted to capture any travelling clots, and Bob was allowed to move to the heart surgery recovery floor. He had been here once before and had been in a standard, double room, receiving “standard” care. This time, however, he was a celebrity. The medical staff had heard about his miraculous surgery and wanted to see this “Mr. Bell” who had survived the impossible. They seemed eager to welcome him, and the CICU was eager to “promote” him.

Bob was still unable to stand and had many wires hooked up. Yet we were very excited about the hope for recovery. He would receive his every-other-day dialysis here on the recovery floor. The extra-long air bed that was specially ordered for him in the CICU was moved with him to the recovery floor. (Bob’s feet hung off the standard beds by at least six inches!) Bob was pleased to discover that the large bed made it too difficult to maneuver with a roommate, so the nursing staff removed the second bed and his “double room” became a large “single”.

We went from a tiny, curtained CICU cubicle, “home” for almost three weeks, to this large room with windows and chairs. Although the room itself was still sparse and sterile, Bob could finally enjoy some quiet rest and visitors could more easily come and keep him company.

Finally! A weekend for me to head home, do some laundry and visit our church. We knew that our church family was in pain over Bob. Most of our extended family lived out of state, and our church members truly had been our partners in these agonizing ordeals. Several had come to visit us, to give their support. They had stood with me by Bob’s comatose body and fought back tears. So many had committed to pray, and were remembering us every day! Two weeks ago, the church had collected a special offering to help with our expenses. Such love and support humbled us, and touched us deeply.

So I was eager to attend church this Sunday. It was a few minutes after the service began that I dragged my tired body into a back pew. The songs, the words, were all soothing to my tired heart. The same God whom we were depending on each day in the noisy

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chaos of emergency surgeries, bandages and blood, was in this beautiful, quiet place of worship. I inhaled deeply and enjoyed the awesome presence of God here.

Then the pastor caught my eye and excitedly announced my name... and I knew what was coming. Pastor wanted a report, up front, at the microphone. Our church is large, seating about 800 each service, but they were our FAMILY. As I stood on the platform, in front of me were the people whose daily prayers had provided the strength that pushed us through each emergency, that gave us courage to face every new crisis. I wanted to tell them how we had seen an AWESOME GOD shine into the darkest places.

My thoughts went back to the family hikes we often took during summer vacations in the Adirondack mountains. Our little ones would struggle after a while of climbing, and Mommy or Daddy would gently put a hand on their bottom and push forward. Yes! That's exactly what these praying friends had done for us.

It was with a grateful heart that I thanked our church family for being our "butt pushers" in this steep climb! We still had more to climb. But for this brief weekend, I had stopped and taken a moment to turn around and enjoy the view. As I gazed on the faces in front of me I saw reflected in them the loving face of my God. As I spoke about the miracles of life for my husband, I knew that God's grace in our lives was more splendid than the most exhilarating view from the top of our mountain hikes.

Yes, we had more terrain to climb, and I mentioned the uncertainty ahead in Bob's condition and with my tumor. Our tenderhearted pastor understood the challenge of this journey and invited the church family to gather around me for prayer.

After service was over, with many hugs, prayers and encouragement, I headed home. My "hiking gear" had been replenished, my "butt pushers" were still in place, and we would journey some more. We didn't know yet how long, how far, or what the terrain ahead would be like. Thankfully, God would not tell us yet what adventures continued to lay ahead....

**When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,  
What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?**

**Psalm 8: 3, 4**

From: Bells  
Sent: August 1, 2007  
Subject: Mountain hiking and the view

Our family always loved taking summer vacations in the Adirondack Mountains. Even when the children were small, we would hike mountains together, and knew that at certain spots it was more difficult than others. Sometimes we would help PUSH the one ahead of us, to keep going forward.

Right now we continue to be thankful for the prayers of so many who are HELPING PUSH Bob and I up the steep climb right now. Many have asked for an update, and although each day brings new surprises we'll try below.

On Sunday, Bob stood (or tried to) for the first time in 3 weeks. Bob had just BEGUN tentative walking after his FIRST surgery, so the 3 weeks following the SECOND surgery have resulted in so much loss of strength. Bob said that trying to stand on legs that had no muscles at all was the hardest thing he'd ever done. For all those friends who have seen Bob move a huge piece of furniture all by himself, you can understand his surprise to see that his legs will not even hold his own weight!!

Then on Monday (7/30) an artery (under one of the incisions in Bob's groin) opened up and it took medical staff almost 4 hours of standing and pushing incredibly hard on the spot to stop the bleeding. By Tuesday, Bob's leg had so much pain that he cannot move it more than an inch or so. Doctors are still perplexed at what is causing all of this.

Today (Wed 8/1) Bob had surgery to put in a tunnel catheter for the dialysis. The KIDNEYS initially began to recover, but we are asking prayer for substantial increase on that... we know God has been gracious in restoring much of the liver, and we desire that for the kidneys also.

Ruth just returned tonight from receiving the progress report on her breast cancer tumor. PET scan showed NO NEW GROWTH and NO SPREADING to other sites. The medication seems to be working to stop new growth, and the doctor feels that if we continue with the medication, it will work to attack the cancer even better once my body is under less stress (awww - less stress sounds nice:))

Crystal was en route to join me at the doctor appointment when her car hydroplaned on the road in one of Florida's quick rain showers. Car is damaged, but Crystal is fine and we are so grateful there were no other cars involved.

Now, back to that hike.... Was the climb worth it? Boy, I wish you could see the view of Lake Whitaker from the top of Dug Mountains!! We would catch our breath in the lean-to built atop the mountain and gasp at God's beauty all around. Bob and I have tried to take some quiet moments (between emergencies) to look at the view of God's work - such wonderful people praying and encouraging, overwhelming

love sent our way, and a God who shows up in so many ways every day, even in the middle of the mess! We have so much to be grateful for, and we still have some stiff hills to climb, so THANKS for helping to push our butts up the mountain!

WE LOVE YOU,  
Ruth (& Bob)

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