



## Who is God When Life Stinks?

### Meanwhile... Back at the Ranch!

Where is that expression from? It seems a fitting title for this chapter. If only it was as simple as heading back to an idyllic ranch setting, grabbing some ham and eggs, pulling on the cowboy boots and hat, and striding out to check on the cattle.

Instead, once the scan appointment was over, it was time to head back to the hospital and check on the latest events in Bob's care. Bob, of course, did not know about our adventures here at home with Crystal's car accident. He and his medical staff were too busy having mighty adventures of their own this day...

Bob's move to the cardiac recovery floor happened on a Friday, and he rested in his new "single" room over the weekend (finally able to enjoy quiet and get some sleep). Nothing much happens with patient care plans over the weekend. We've been here long enough to know that. So we just reminded ourselves to be patient and rest.

So we were very surprised when, on a quiet Sunday morning, an eager physical therapy team started their rounds on this floor. All cardiac post-surgery patients are encouraged to get up and walk as soon as possible. The physical therapists have special "gait belts" that securely go around the patient's waist and allow the therapist to hold onto them. Chairs are positioned in the hallway as resting points. EVERYONE is expected to walk!

Bob had to remind the therapists on his first visit here that his problem was blood clots, and that the doctors wanted his leg elevated. It took a lot of reminders! Now on his second visit, the therapists were surprised to see him back.

This time, there were no orders for bed rest, so the therapists seemed eager for the challenge of getting all six foot eight inches of Bob up and on his feet! Bob has always had extremely strong legs. Many of our friends and family have relied on his muscles—strong back, strong arms and legs—as he gets called often to help move furniture or other heavy projects!

The difference now was that for the past eight weeks, Bob had been either in the hospital or at home recuperating from his first surgery. He had not been allowed out of bed on his first visit here, and then had obviously been in bed during his recent coma and life support. What would it be like to try to stand for the first time in weeks?

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Bob would later describe the experience as “the most difficult thing I’ve ever tried”! He had several physical therapists bracing his legs, his hips, and holding onto his shoulders. They coached, they urged and they pulled. As Bob cooperated the best he could, they raised his torso off the bed and everyone soon discovered NO STRENGTH in those once-sturdy legs. Nothing that Bob or the therapist tried could make his legs support him. Bob was stunned! It was obvious that a long road lay ahead for rebuilding these atrophied muscles.

Bob rested that night, and the reality of his situation sunk in. He would not be a “bounce-back-quick” case this time. It would take a lot of determination, work and cooperation to rebuild just the muscles. We had watched God do miracles with such intricate body functions, but Bob now had a huge responsibility to work with rehabilitating the damaged muscles and limbs. It was a shock for Bob to recognize this stranger in his own being—physical weakness—but he seemed determined to accept what God had given. I was grateful to know he would do whatever necessary to cooperate.

That night, while I was gone, Bob noticed some bleeding under his sheet in the groin area. One of the large arteries there had been cut into as access for the heart-lung bypass, and had just begun to heal. The night nurses were called to check on this bleeding. They carefully applied some pressure bandaging and checked him often.

Early Monday morning, the doctors and “doc-lings” began their rounds on the floor. Bob could hear them at the room next door. He also could feel some blood seeping through his pressure bandages. By the time the doctor reached his room, Bob’s groin was bleeding into his sheets again. The doctor removed the pressure bandage to get a look.

Imagine a visit to Yellowstone National Park at the time when a geyser is set to explode. This is what the attending physician experienced once he removed Bob’s pressure bandage. Ohh, not a good thing! The blood was shooting with such force that it actually created a geyser-like shape and made an enormous mess!

Quickly, all the medical people on the rounds started scrambling. Gauze was grabbed, orders were shouted, and many hands applied pressure to the point of bleeding. Each time the gauze filled, and had to be removed, another shot of blood would cause them to hurriedly press down again.

Two of the lowest ranked “doc-lings” were now assigned to Bob’s bedside. One would press for 15 minutes, until he became exhausted. Then, switch.... and the other would

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press. They pressed on, without letting up, for not one hour, or two hours, or three, but **FOUR CONTINUOUS HOURS!!** They needed to pump Bob with morphine, as the pressure brought excruciating pain.

By the time I arrived that evening the bleeding had stopped. Yes, God was kind to leave me out of this new bloody episode, even though we were experiencing lots of adventures back home with Crystal and her ditched car, and my scan!

Bob filled me in on the details. He was growing concerned about the fact that he could not move that leg. The pressure applied to his artery had also numbed his muscles and we were unsure if this was a temporary condition or if it would be permanent. There was little we could do except to keep Bob still, and wait.

Then the doctor came in specifically to see me. The doctors on the recovery floor usually reported on Bob's progress with calm, and casual conversation—after all, they see difficult situations all the time. This doctor today, however, appeared shook. He looked me in the eye, and said, “Mrs. Bell, you need to be sleeping **here** in your husband's room tonight.”

Normally I tried to leave Bob's hospital room at night, and return to the apartment for some uninterrupted sleep. It also was important to my physical and mental health to step away from the drama and trauma of these halls, even if just for a few short hours.

Looking at the concern written on the doctor's face, I replied, “Okay”, wondering just what I was supposed to do to help the situation. Perhaps the doctor felt more secure knowing that, in a busy hospital ward, with Bob tucked away in his own room, the nurses might not know of an emergency in time. That was my signal that tonight I would need to “sleep” with “one eye open”!

**Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God,  
and set a watch against them day and night. Nehemiah 4:9**

From: Beth F. (*a university student in Bangkok, where Ruth had worked a previous summer but had to cancel this year due to cancer and Bob's health*)  
Sent: Thursday, July 12, 2007 8:33 PM  
To: ruth@macroped.com  
Subject: Hi Ruth and Bob

Dear Ruth,

You both have been so close in thought and mind this week. The professors here have been keeping us up to date on what is happening with Bob.

How long can the arms of love stretch to give you comfort? From heaven to right where you are? From Bangkok to right where you are? It is 4 AM, I was sleeping, but God woke me up, to pray for you? To write to you?

So here I am. And here is Psalm 91:

1 As for you, the one who lives in the shelter of the Sovereign One,  
and resides in the protective shadows of the mighty kings-

2 I say this about the LORD, my shelter and my stronghold,  
my God in whom I trust-

3 he will certainly rescue you from the snare of the hunter  
and from the destructive plague.

4 He will shelter you with his wings;  
you will find safety under his wings. His faithfulness is like a shield or a protective wall.

5 You need not fear the terrors of the night, the arrow that flies by day,  
6 the plague that comes in the darkness, or the disease that comes at noon.

7 Though a thousand may fall beside you, and a multitude on your right side,  
it will not reach you.

8 Certainly you will see it with your very own eyes- you will see the wicked paid back.

9 For you have taken refuge in the LORD, my shelter, the Sovereign One.

10 No harm will overtake you; no illness will come near your home.

11 For he will order his angels to protect you in all you do.

12 They will lift you up in their hands, so you will not slip and fall on a stone.

13 You will subdue a lion and a snake; you will trample underfoot a young lion and a serpent.

14 The LORD says, "Because he is devoted to me, I will deliver him; I will protect him because he is loyal to me.

15 When he calls out to me, I will answer him.  
I will be with him when he is in trouble; I will rescue him and bring him honor.

16 I will satisfy him with long life, and will let him see my salvation.

So, dear Ruth and Bob, I can see that you are in the hands of the Almighty, our Lord. I pray for comfort, peace and strength for you.

I am sending love. May God's grace be the sustenance of you souls, Beth

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