

# IT'S A GOOD LIFE!!

I live a pretty good life despite being a total quadriplegic. When I was forty, I thought my life would include a big sailboat and Pam, and I would be sailing around the world at age sixty. But life has a way of changing your plans. We had two kids that were in high school and we did a lot with them including scouts and hiking. We went frequently to Rockaway to stay with Pam's father. At least two times a year, we went to my dad's house on Flat Point on Lopez Island, where he lived on the beach with my mom, Pam and the kids would go to Hawaii to stay with her mom, who managed an apartment complex on Waikiki Beach. Pam was happy volunteering in the many events and activities in which our kids were involved. She was well known around Forest Grove and we always were in the "Gay 90's".

I was happy being a manager at Intel. I had worked on the Agena Space Craft, Titan Three, and the Viking landing on Mars. I worked in the Solar House design, Laser Fusion, and numerous projects on Hydrogen cars. I also worked on nuclear tests and others I can't talk about. I felt I had accomplished much. We had a good life in Forest Grove. I felt very accomplished and my family was happy.

The next summer, after I turned forty, I started having problems with my voice. On Pam's birthday I was diagnosed with ALS. I didn't know what ALS was but Pam had a neighbor who died from it when she was in high school. She knew most people with ALS lived for only three years. She was very alarmed. I went to the MDA Clinic for a second diagnosis. Dr. Jacob Wilson confirmed the diagnosis of ALS. Then he told me I was no different from other people. Most people have the cause of their death working at age 40. I was no different. I had a fatal disease, but I didn't know what the future would bring, so go out and live my life because I didn't know what would happen. I felt much better after that and went out and lived my life.

My daughter Alethia was a junior in high school when I was diagnosed. It hit her hard, but my son David continued to go camping with me and had lots of men to keep him from being depressed. The next year we all did the Bowron Lake loop in canoes. I had little problem. We had a bear come through our campsite and the only damage was my tent because I had taken the emergency pack in my tent and it had food in it. The next year I had to use the wheel chair a lot.

We went on my sabbatical from Intel to Jasper, Canada and the Tetons. We went to Fiji and went around the island for sixty dollars and met a lot of Fijian's. I got an introduction to Fiji and their culture. We then went to Hawaii. We went to the island of Kauai. We got there after a hurricane went through and the island was trashed. We then went to Pam's mom's for another two weeks.

Upon returning to work at Intel, I completed development of the Ion Mill for repairing microchips and got FEI to build it. Meanwhile, I became wheelchair dependant. I was known for crashing through doors in my motorized wheelchair. The kids graduated from high school and went on to college. Pam increasingly had to take care of me. When I became full time care, the insurance provided full time nurse coverage. It was hard for Pam to accept having strangers in the house all of the time. I went to work in a Tri Met lift bus and Pam would pick us up in our wheelchair van. This left Pam free to work on her projects and her increasingly severe complications of life with diabetes.

I had a clavicle feeding tube put in when I started having trouble swallowing. Intel bought me an eye gaze machine and said I could keep working as long as I wanted. I was forced to get a trache in 1995 and Pam wouldn't let me leave the hospital until I

(over)



could go home with nurses. I was by then a total quadriplegic. I had to sell my sailboat and violin. This was very hard on me since I had been sailing and playing music since I was 11. We had a good life until Pam had a diabetic heart attack in 1999. The loss of Pam, who I had been with for 35 years, was devastating. David got married that same year, his heart heavy with the loss of his mom.

I retired from Intel in 2001 and got an RV that year. We went to Bryce Canyon and the Grand Canyon. We were in Twin Falls, Idaho when the twin towers were attacked. I listened to the whole thing on NPR. The next year we went to Salmon Point, in Canada. Then in July we started for D.C. It was an epic trip. We saw my old house and friends in Denver. Then we went across the great boring plains until we got to Missouri, which was buggy. We spent a week in D.C. seeing all the sights and Senator Smith. At the Air and Space Museum they found my name on a model of the Viking Lander. We then went to Chicago, Mt. Rushmore, and Jackson Hole, where I had camped for two months when I was 16. From there we went home.

After two weeks we went through the fire to Banff and to Lake Louise. After another week we went to Jasper through the ice field. We had a great time in Jasper and took the Glacier tour and went up on a mountain on a gondola. School was starting so we had to leave Jasper one day early. Outside Hope, BC the RV caught on fire and burned to the ground. All of us got out safely and we went home the next day. I spent the next six months getting a new RV. It had a bad ground, so the next summer we spent some time broken down on the side of the road. When we finally got home the RV went to Freightliner for what seemed like forever. I camped in my trailer this year. Then, we found the bad ground when the RV broke down in La Pine. It has worked well since then and I have gone to Florence twice and we just got back from the Wild Life Safari.

As you can see, being a vent dependant quadriplegic has allowed me to live a full life. I have a new granddaughter named Maevin. Life is very good!!

Mike Ward