



Adventures

ALS Adventures is a periodic account of life's experiences by a person living with the disease.
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BLOW-BLOW-BLOW ... now breathe. WAIT ... that's not my role! I don't have a role! Yes I do! I'm here to watch! WATCH?! Susan said, "Cover your eyes." What? Why am I here ... I thought I was here to watch! But REALLY ... I don't WANT to watch! Then why am I here!!!

Things have changed! The last time I had babies, the father 'might' be allowed in the delivery room, if he had completed a rigorous certificated Lamaze class. Nowadays, they let anybody in! Doesn't matter, family, friends, the vending machine guy ... even illegal aliens who don't speak-a-the-English that happen to be strolling through the hospital, "come on in ... it's show time!"

Eight months ago, Cori announced she was going to have a baby. "But she's not old enough," I said. What I meant was ... Susan and I are not old enough to be grandparents! Well, maybe I am. I turn sixty today, and possibly I'll get a very special gift ... our first grandbaby ... expected today, MY birthday! What are the odds?!

None of that matters right now though. Susan, me, the baby's father Jesse, Cori, we're all hanging out in the "Birthing Room." You wouldn't believe it. They've got these special hotel looking rooms, called Birthing Rooms. There are three comfy lounge chairs, cable TV, soft lighting, a computer set up in the corner, (Alright! I can check my e-mail!). No ... don't touch it! The computer I'm told is attached to Cori.

There's a chart. Looks like something created on an Excel spreadsheet. It's monitoring contractions. Geez, in the old days, that was the dad's dutiful role. You know, time the contractions, act useless ... serve as the dedicated recipient of the mother's voluminous verbal abuse.

They even have wires connected to the baby. Um ... I don't know how they got attached ...it was one of those times I had to cover my eyes. Use your imagination ... you figure it out.

Then there's the waiting. It's agonizing. The minutes crawl by. They don't have any magazines. Daytime TV is worthless. Even those cozy lounge chairs get uncomfortable. What's a guy to do? Cori won't be quiet long enough to let Jesse or me get some sleep. She needs to pee, or have something changed. (I don't know what got changed ... I had my eyes covered!)

How about the cute maternity staff. Ah-ha ... there's something to do! Scope out the maternity staff. Hmm. They all dress alike ... green. Susan, she doesn't have any interest in rating the maternity staff. And I guess I can't really discuss the them with Jesse either. That's sick ... do you think I'm a perv!?

Look! Susan figured out something to do. She's over there fiddling with the computer! She scrolled through the computer menu, and guess what. She's watching the contractions of every other expectant mother in the hospital ... from right here in the privacy of our very own room! WHOA! Sign me up! Can't wait for my turn to scroll!

Fifteen hours already ... the delivery doc just completed his exam ... 8 centimeters! (Yes, I covered my eyes.) "Won't be long now." As he strolls out to hang in the doctor's lounge.

Four hours later ... you can call me "Granddaddy"!

It has been twenty something years since I was thrilled to be in a delivery room. So I figured, this time, no big deal ... WRONG!

First off, that Birthing Room. She had the baby right there. (Guess I should have guessed ... why else call it a Birthing Room ...duh!) I've decided, birthing IS NOT a man thing.



Just call me Granddaddy!

Here's the setting. There's the four of us. Susan and me. Jesse, and of course Cori. (The delivery doc is off lounging or something.) I've got my laptop over in a corner, busily typing up this episode of ALS Adventures. Susan and Jesse are being attentive to Cori. (Their duty for the last hour or so.) Then the nurse sauntered in and checked for dilation ... it's time! She rips back the covers! Started rearranging things and announced, "No one's going to panic!" (Me? Panic? Not to worry! I'm not even going to look ... I've already got my eyes covered!)

The nurse assigned Susan and Jesse jobs. (Whew! She skipped me. I wondered ... think it's because I have my eyes covered?) I mumbled

as loud as my ALS accent would allow. “Where’s the doctor! Where’s the baby staff?!” No one paid me any attention! (I watch ER every week. I know how many people ought to be there ... at least four or five! WHERE ARE THEY!???)

Hanna Michaela Walters. Michaela, named after me, (Spell Michael, and add an ‘a’ at the end ... what a trip!) 7 pounds, 3.4 ounces ... 21 inches long ... it’s a girl! We already knew the gender ... things have changed!



Cori with Baby Hannah – 1 day old

Living with ALS ... it’s been a treat this past month.

- Dealt with the affects of having a cold
- Got new meds ... they help with nighttime choking
- Got a new machine ... it helps with breathing
- Susan tried recipes from the, I Can’t Chew cookbook
- And not surprisingly, although the loss rate has slowed, I’m still losing weight.

All in all ... on the ALS front, a sucky month. And if that weren’t enough ... I’m feeling the first signs of muscle weakness in my legs.

But all news is not grim. I saw all the docs. They sucked blood, poked, prodded, tested and analyzed. They did what they do best for ALS patients ... they worked on ways to improve quality of life.

That business of sleeping an hour and waking up choking is gone. The new meds have restored a full night’s

sleep. And as Martha Stewart would say, “That’s a good thing.”

The breathing machine has been fun. I strap on this funny snorkel looking device. It has a flexible hose with two tiny toilet-plunger looking rubber do-hickies that plug into my nostrils. The hose hugs the bridge of my nose and runs up the center of my face and over the top of my head, where it trails off to the breathing machine.

It’s a pretty clever design. That machine senses my breathing pattern, and it joins in, providing just a little more air than I am breathing on my own. That process is supposed to increase the oxygen, and reduce the carbon dioxide. They tell us that will restore energy. And as Martha would say about restored energy, “That’s a good thing.”

I haven’t fully learned to use the breathing machine yet. They say it takes a while. But I have to tell you one thing ... it makes me look sexy. Picture a Klingon warrior from a Star Wars movie. Ready to man the controls of a star fleet fighter. That’s me ... pure SEX!

The really big issue this past month has been the discussions about getting a feeding tube. (Those of us who are in with the “in crowd,” call it a PEG.) I’ll be seeing the PEG doc next week to schedule the installation date.

Everyone we’ve talked to, who already has a PEG, can’t quit singing its praises. It will assure good nutrition, restore me to optimum weight, and eliminate the dreaded mealtime swallowing ordeal. So in a weird sort of way, I’m starting to look forward to it.

The other issue we’re starting to think about is some kind of walk-

ing aid. I’m still walking, but lengthy walks, ramps, stairs ... I’m learning to reach for the handrail. And, within the last few days, we have used the handicapped parking. (Can’t stand it.) They issued me a handicap parking plaque months ago. I refused to use it ... “I’m still walking just fine, thank you, so I’m not using it till I have to!” I guess the moment has arrived.

The docs have advised that I stop carrying things too. Now that’s a problem! I’m the man ... I’m the one who is supposed to carry the packages, grocery bags, suitcases etc. You know, chivalry ... the man gets the door, leads the way down the stairs, walks on the curb side of his lady, AND HE CARRIES HIS OWN DAMNED COMPUTER!!!

October is stacking up to be a BIG month. Consider Jason, our oldest son’s birthday, my birthday, Susan & my anniversary, a new granddaughter, and add to that several prominent friends who have October birthdays.

One final comment. Susan and I are taking a sign language class. (We’re going to beat this communication problem one way or the other!)

Next week ... we’re headed to New York. Jason, our oldest son, family hippie, and most lovable rebel, has been “discovered.” The New York Museum of Modern Art will be showing several pieces of Jason’s graphic artwork. Can’t wait to go there ... can’t wait to write next month’s episode!