

Volume 2 Issue 7

**Wedding No. 2
July 4, 2006**

You may recall about a year ago I predicted that our time would be consumed by two weddings and a baby. So by now you've read the fun parts of wedding number one, you've read about the exciting birth of our first grandbaby, and now ... wedding number two, it's history.

But did you pick up on the order of the events? I said two weddings and a baby. Not one wedding, a baby, and another wedding. Somehow as the months unfolded, the sequence of things to come ... got mixed up.

When I was a kid, we talked of Shotgun Weddings. You know. Get her pregnant and pappy grabs his shotgun and ... who needs a wedding planner!

Nowadays we're supposed to be more open thinking. (I'm thinking shotgun.) But nooo. Parents today hear much more than they want to. At least I know I do. I'm thinking, "No, I don't want to know that you're pregnant." Not till after the wedding. I can do the math ... and we won't talk about it.

But Cori said, "I don't want to walk down the aisle all fat and pregnant!" What!?! (Hands over my ears!) "We'll have the baby then plan the wedding after I lose a few pounds." (My eyes are rolling!)

Susan's better at this stuff than I am. She just patted me on the knee.

What a delightful event! Cori looked beautiful. (She did lose 55 pounds!) I was there to walk her down the aisle. (Well, actually I rolled ... my

walking days are over.) Wheelchair rolled onto her dress, only a couple of times. It stayed up (whew!).



Last moment kiss before the stroll down the aisle.

The groom, Jesse, baby Hannah's dad, he's a good guy. He and I have one of those razzmatazz handshakes, ends with a simultaneous snap of fingers. We did it at the hand-off part of the ceremony. Funny!

The reception was fun. At one point the DJ played *Unchained Melody*, the tune that Susan and I consider our wedding song.

That's my queue. I hit the "go" button on that power wheelchair and zoomed to the center of the dance floor. Susan joined me (sat in my lap); we spun around the dance floor. Boy, was I light on my feet, we never missed a beat. See the picture.



Haven't lost our touch. Timing was right on.

The honeymoon ... yes, baby Hannah went with them. "We wouldn't think of leaving her behind," they exclaimed as destination plans took shape.

Oh well ... think about it ... drag out a shotgun today and you'd be

surrounded by the SWAT team. Guess times have changed!

Contraptions. They're high on our list this month.

The elevator/lift, a project we started in January, was hung up in the building department. (Until Susan called her own meeting with the city. Guess they learned what she considered urgent. They also had to listen to her smart ass request for city staff's assistance getting me up and down the stairs. Hmmm!)

The contractor is about finished with the mezzanine (place for the lift to land to serve our second level condo), and the lift manufacturer thinks their lift contraption will be ready in another couple of weeks for installation. Finally!

The power wheelchair. (Been using a loaner.) It takes about two to three months to get our very own custom designed chair. It's truly a contraption though. Everything tilts and rises. Powered by big ole hulking automotive batteries, it weighs a ton and can do most anything and go most anywhere. (Now we must come to grips with a vehicle designed to haul the wheelchair ... it never ends!)

Then there's our master bathroom. It was never designed to be handicap accessible. It is now. We've just lived through 3 weeks of gutting and remodeling.

There are two events that make this period somewhat memorable.

The guest bathroom has a tub/shower. We decided we could use the guest bathroom while our master bath was being remodeled. So far, so good.

First thing, Susan rushed out and purchased one of those handicap shower seats. It's a bench that sits in the tub, but it also straddles the side of the tub. The concept is that you sit on the bench outside the tub, then spin around and scoot over so you are

sitting on the seat, but now fully inside the tub.

Well, I didn't like it. I didn't want to sit in the shower. Besides, I can't walk, but I can still stand ... with something to hold onto. (Susan?)

So I assured Susan that if she could help me climb over the tub, I could stand for my shower ... and hold onto her. She carefully lifted each leg into the tub ... I'm finished!

Now for the getting out. We tried the reverse procedure. Both feet out, but look out! I'm not balanced! Susan's holding my left, slippery soaking wet arm. My feet start to slip from under me! Legs are not strong enough to gain a new footing. I'm starting a slow fall. Susan is holding onto that wet arm hollering at me not to fall. I tried to obey. Couldn't stop ... I'm going down inside the tub!

Because she was holding my left arm, I sort of rolled into the tub ... landing on my butt. Both feet hanging out over the side as though I was striking some kind of playful pose. (Can you imagine the setting?)

Whatever. Susan could not lift me. She ran to get a neighbor. That did it. (Seems that modesty is less concern than it was at one time.)

Okay, we used that damn shower seat from then on. I still don't like it! Makes washing your butt a special project. Ever tried taking a shower sitting down? Try it, you won't like it either. You don't even have to try it ... just think about it. Don't work, see?

The next challenge caught us by surprise.

I was kicking back enjoying the beach view in my loaner recliner/lift chair. (It's from the ALS loan closet, you know, one of those chairs that's powered to help you stand up. It sort

of dumps up and out so when it is fully extended you are almost standing.) Nevertheless, that's one more contraption that has entered our life. Works pretty good.

Anyway, I was kicking back when the bathroom construction crew announced they needed to hot mop the shower. No big deal. I've been around that odor. Some folks think it smells like money. So I paid little attention to their activity.

Oops! Not good thinking! That odor went straight through my trach tube directly to my lungs, by-passed my nose, pure hot mop fumes to the lungs. Instant burn, triggered throw-up! I was in trouble!

I hit the chair dump button. Josie phoned Susan who was running local errands; Susan pulled into the Seal Beach Fire Department and explained that she needed 3 big guys to get me down the stairs. (Wasn't exactly a 911 call, more like friendly helpful visit.)

Now that the bathroom is finished, the contraptions are pretty cool.

We now have a mono-rail mounted to the ceiling in our bedroom. It leads through the dressing area, into the new shower and over the toilet.

There is a battery powered hoist with a sling mechanism designed to scoop me up. Susan can now get me into bed, or out, take me to the shower or toilet, all without help.

See the picture. That's me neatly swaddled in the sling. It's more comfortable than it looks. It's quite a contraption!

The one final contraption is a French thingy. Warm water, warm air, hmmm. It's called a bidet. Supposed to be great. I say great at what?? I've got too much red neck behind my ears. Don't know about this

thing. If it's so good ... why do we still have a toilet paper roll?



Swathed in the lift. Much more comfortable than it looks.

Hospice. A topic I have not much wanted to talk about. You see, when I first learned I had the dreaded ALS I decided I would not get the feeding tube or the tracheostomy if I had lost other body movement functions.

Well, I was still walking and using my hands, so I opted to get those devices that have extended my life by several months. But the disease has caught up. My bodily functions are now such that if I were making those decisions today I would opt out.

That also brings me to the next logical step is the gruesome process. Hospice. It's time.

I've accepted Jesus Christ as my savior. Entering hospice means I have only a few short weeks left on this planet. Sadly I must begin to think about how to wrap up these Adventures. Maybe I can crank out one more to give you a view of hospice from the inside out. We'll see.

“Readers who want to learn more about ALS can log onto the ALS Association's website ... www.alsa.org.