

# R F N I

Catch The News

February 2014

Issue No: 276



*Happy  
Valentine's  
Day  
Children!*

# Katy Visits Disneyworld

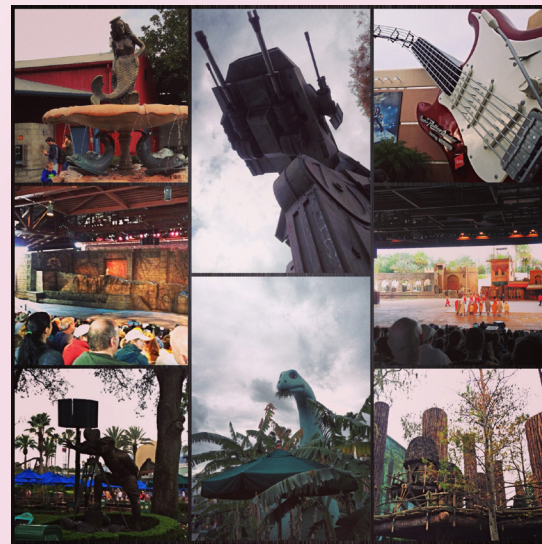
By Katy Riel



Last month I was invited to go to Disneyworld with my Aunt Brenda, Uncle David, and my cousin Robbie. Surprisingly, it was my first trip out there. With as often as I go to Disneyland, I thought I knew what to expect, but I was wrong. The place is huge! The whole resort is the same size as San Francisco.

We went for a week and spent a day at each park. We also took a whole day to go fishing on the lake in Downtown Disney. That was another first for me. I must have had beginners luck because I caught my limit, five bass, with the heaviest being a little over 2lbs. I also took first fish, most fish, and biggest fish, although my Uncle will tell you different!

I had a blast and want to go back, a week was not enough time to see everything. I think my favorite park was Animal Kingdom. It was so much fun to go on the safari and see all the animals up close. I know it sounds a lot like our zoo or the wild animal park but it was so much cooler.



# News From Aunt Eloise

Postmarked January 13, 2014

Dear Margaret,

Congratulations! You and Bud will be great grandparents. You will truly enjoy being a grandmother. I am so happy for you.

The news of Frank's death in 2013 was tragic. I am so sorry for Edith and for all the family. I hope Edith is accepting Frank's death as God's will. She will miss him - I know I still miss Jimmie, but we had almost 60 years together. Wonderful years!

In August 2013 I fell and broke my left hip. Then when I recovered enough to walk comfortably with a walker, I suffered a stroke that affected my right side. I've had to learn to walk and write again. I think I have managed the walking better than the writing. I am scheduled to go home Wednesday the 15th. It is going to be great to be home.

My family is doing just fine and everyone happy. Susan and Jason are still in Rock Hill at Winthrop University. Susan in Library research and Jason, History professor. Alex, their 22 year old son, is at present in S. Africa on Wofford University's January Interim. He will bring a report back on plant life. Alex is finishing college this year and making plans for more education.

Debbie and Dave are happily enjoying their three granddaughters, ages 14, 10 and 8. Andy is a Major Chaplain with the army at Fort Bragg. He is presently taking a Master's degree in Psychology (the 3 granddaughters belong to Stacy and Andy). Stacy is teaching Latin in a private school in N.C. Meghan, married to Scott, is working in Charleston as a PA and enjoying it. Scott is still with M.V.S.C. Debbie is Head Master at Thomas Sumter Academy so she stays very busy. She loves it almost as much as being a grandmother! Dave builds anything the hardware company needs.

Thanks so much for your Christmas letter. I hope 2014 will be one that brings many blessings for all the Riels in CA.

Love to everyone,  
Aunt Eloise

Eloise Riel

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Love to everyone,  
Aunt Eloise



# Runny Nose Update

## January 2014

By Bruce Hartman

Dammit...I wish it was all better news! January has been challenging!

I was scheduled for foot surgery on January 20th to remove the first screw they installed a little over a year ago and re-do the surgery correctly. That all fell apart late Friday afternoon January 17th with the surgery scheduled for Monday morning at 6:00 AM. Let's run with "frustrated" as the operative word here... Especially after clearing work schedules, FMLA, Disability, handing off job duties etc.

The muscle disease and my heart both took a dive and made performing surgery too risky for the doctors to feel good about. I am currently trying to regain some control of the muscle disease by taking multiple mega-dose corticosteroid IV's. After three days of IV's the weakness in my back and shoulders is considerably better but a new manifestation of the disease is that it is actively attacking my jaw, throat, neck and tongue making chewing and swallowing a serious challenge. I mentioned that to my rheumatologist which immediately turned into a hospital admittance and subsequent stay (a bunch of Dudley Do Right do-gooders). The meds do not seem to be controlling the facial muscles so they fear aspirating, choking etc! It scares me to think that I might become that guy with the slurred speech that no one can understand and chokes on everything! Look at the bright side though... it'll give everyone something new to make fun of...Kid-ding... you guys have no sense of humor! I could see the eye rolls and hear the groans from here!

They have doubled what was already a huge dose of IV steroids and I am now in a wait & see mode for a few days hoping it will affect the neck and facial muscles. They have pretty well run the gamut of other drugs and we always end up back at corticosteroids despite the collateral damage they cause. I am still going in once a month for 5 days of IVIG (Intravenous immunoglobulin) infusions. In fact I was in the infusion center when my rheumatologist admitted me into the hospital and I ended up finishing the last day of infusions in the privacy of my hospital room instead of the infusion center.

The congestive heart failure is getting a lot worse. I am short of breath even without exertion at times. Managing fluid balance is everything, albeit challenging on steroids. Even getting dressed is enough to require several minutes of recovery time. I go in for two days of rigorous heart testing in a week and hope to learn a lot more. Btw... I can't begin to tell you all how much I appreciate the scooters from Frank and Edith...I have Franks at work and use it every day and Edith's is here at home and also gets a lot of use.

They will reschedule my foot surgery soon once heart results are known and the muscle enzymes drop back to an acceptable level...normal = 30-190 and I'm around 500... the enzyme (CK) Creatine Kinase, is what the muscles give off as they are damaged and is a strong indicator of disease activity along with sedimentation rate and liver stuff, all currently off the charts. Kind of funny how this works though...I tell the doctor that all these things are out of control and then she sends me to the lab only to learn that all these things are out of control... Modern medicine!

For over two years now I have been dealing with and walking on a broken foot! I just want the damned thing fixed! They tell me "I'm Complicated" which makes this simple surgery a difficult thing...sort of pisses me off! Walking would sure be nice even if my heart doesn't think so!

So that's the latest in the saga...Birdy, as always, is my rock...she maybe a soft rock but always there for me! Thank God she has her twin...that soft rock would quickly turn to mud without Listy!



# Runny Nose Addendum

## February 7, 2014

I wanted to add just a bit to the update I sent in to our illustrious editor a week or two ago. Things often change quickly in my world.

On Tuesday February 4th I had the resting baseline test of a two-day nuclear stress test done at Kaiser and then I went to work after that around 10:00AM. All day I experienced chest pain and SVT's (Supraventricular Tachycardia) but blew it off since this is not exactly out of the norm for me. When I got home we had some homemade soup that Birdy made for dinner, after which I took a shower. While toweling off my chest pain reached the OMG level (that's technically one notch below the "Holy Shit" level) and I felt sure I was going down. I laid down on the bed for 10 or 15 minutes but continued to get worse (see above for pain level definitions) so we called the paramedics. By the time the fire truck showed up I was still experiencing SVT's they stuck the pads on me to shock, but tried the cardio-conversion drug first. Thankfully it worked! The drug stops the heart and sort of re-boots. It beats the hell out of electric shock! By then the ambulance guys showed up and they took me to Alvarado hospital instead of Kaiser because they have a catheter lab at Alvarado.

That decision to divert to Alvarado was made in route when I started to lose sinus rhythm again so Birdy had no clue. She drove to Kaiser and I was nowhere to be found. Kaiser kept telling her to wait outside in the ambulance bay and I would probably be along...she was getting pretty upset because she knew something wasn't right...the ambulance left long before her and didn't have to look for parking! After asking several people to please call her I finally convinced a nurse to do so. Bird was bit frazzled but stoic when she finally showed up! I put her through hell sometimes! Later in the evening, I took a second ambulance ride to Kaiser where we stayed the next 12 hours in the ER and finally were admitted to the hospital once stable. Do you have any idea how uncomfortable a gurney is after several hours? Especially with a terribly pinched nerve in my back...but now I digress.

They did the second half of the nuclear stress test on my second day of the hospital stay. The bad news in all of this came yesterday with those results. I was hoping to hear they found some blockages in some of the cardiac arteries (not what most people hope for I know) because for me, that would mean they could go in and do angioplasty and stent placement to restore flow and overnight, viola, I would be able to breathe again. The news that I received is exactly what I didn't want

to hear, and that is that this heart problem/shortness of breath is all disease related and like the disease, there is little they can do.

The easiest explanation is: All of my muscles are being destroyed by the disease so operating the muscles takes twice the effort and twice the blood to get half the strength. With the congestive heart failure already diminishing heart output it doesn't take much activity to overload the heart. It speeds up when called upon and is even less efficient causing things to get out of whack quickly. The challenge in this is that by "moderate activity" I am talking about walking across a parking lot, taking a shower and getting dressed etc. Not exactly the kind of stuff you need to do stretching exercises before starting!

None of this is a big shocker and I'm not sitting here on the "Pity-Pot". I talked to my rheumatologist yesterday at length and she is willing to try some more and different meds. She knows of one last med we have not tried but cautioned that it is very toxic and I would need to study up on it and give informed consent to try it. Apparently the side effects are scary to read about...

One last thing...there has been no improvement in the facial muscles following the IV mega doses of steroids. The muscle disease is a bit out of control right now and nothing seems to be effective in slowing it down...what can I say...Life's a bitch right now! But it will get better!

I will return to work on Monday to business as usual... But the real question remains: Was it Birdy's homemade tomato/chipotle soup that we had for dinner that was the root cause of all of this? Hmmmm, I guess we'll never know!

### ***What is supraventricular tachycardia?***

***Supraventricular tachycardia (SVT) means that from time to time your heart beats very fast for a reason other than exercise, high fever, or stress. During an episode of SVT, the heart's electrical system doesn't work right, causing the heart to beat very fast. The heart beats at least 100 beats per minute and may reach 300 beats per minute. After treatment or on its own, the heart usually returns to a normal rate of 60 to 100 beats a minute.***

## Bruce and Birdy take the Grandkids to Sea World

Although Bruce has been through some rough times as documented in the previous pages it doesn't mean that he just sits there with nothing to do! Hey Bruce, no foot surgery today what are you going to do? "I'm taking my grandkids to Sea World!!!"

And that's exactly what he and Birdy did. They gathered up Mathew, Corbin and Josie and off to the Mission Bay park they went. They had a wonderful time watching the shows, seeing the exhibits and of course, watching the kids play. Josie saw most of the park from her stroller while Corbin and Matthew ran from place to place as brothers will do. Bruce, on his scooter had no problem keeping up with the gang, but poor Bird had to hustle just to keep everyone in sight.

Cousin Chris, who works at Sea World, just happened to be on duty and was able to meet up with the Hartmans for a quick visit. It's nice to have family in the business because Chris invited everyone in to go swimming with Shamu... Ok just kidding... But I'll bet Corbin would have taken him up on it!

So, all thing considered, Bruce traded a day in surgery for a day at Sea World with his Grandkids. Even though he really wants to have his foot get better, this was a great way to spend a day! We all hope Bruce feels better soon and we keep him in our prayers every day. Hang in there Bruce, we all love you!





# FIRE DISPLACES DAVID AND MEGAN

Heartland Fire & Rescue crews were dispatched shortly before 3:30 p.m. to the 4700 block of Fourth Street near Lemon Avenue, according to fire officials. Heartland firefighters were assisted by Cal Fire and San Diego Fire-Rescue Department crews and had the blaze knocked down about 3:45 p.m., according to Heartland Fire & Rescue. The two units

were damaged and the American Red Cross was summoned to help the displaced residents.

Unfortunately, the displaced residents were David Gillingham and Megan! They were not at home when the fire erupted but were notified by officials when they found Ripley, Megan's sweet cat of many years. The smoke was too much for her as she was unable to escape (which made Megan very sad). Luckily, David and Megan had renter's insurance for the contents and thus were taken care of by insurance. They get to spend the next 2 weeks in a hotel suite in Mission Valley. After that, the insurance company will help them find a new place to live and will help finance it by not raising their rent (covering the extra expense for the new rent). There was much smoke damage and as a result, it is unknown if Megan and David will be able to retrieve any belongings (they are worried about released toxins in the air). We are so happy that they were not near the house when it happened (though we will miss Ripley).

They do not have a cause for the blaze and there is a question whether or not negligence from the owners will come into play. Let's hope everything works out well for them and they end up in a better situation given the trouble this has caused. On a nice note, the bar next door (Johnny B's) took up a collection up to help them out on their first night being homeless. It's nice to be loved! Thank you to everyone who offered beds and support!

## ***Message From Megan***

Just wanted to put out a quick update to everyone about what has been going on the past 24 hours.

While en route to a super bowl party yesterday I received a call around 5pm from the La Mesa fire department letting me know that the neighbor's side of our duplex had caught fire. We arrived to a tragic and catastrophic scene. The neighbor's home was structurally standing but absolute rubble and ash on the inside. Fortunately she was not home. Onlookers said the place went up in flames in a matter of moments and the fire crews arrived just as quickly.

My heart is absolutely broken with the news that our beloved kitty Ripley did not survive. The smoke was too much for her and she died from the inhalation. They found her sleeping peacefully and I am comforted in knowing that she likely had a quiet and painless death. We are both devastated by this loss.

Thanks to my brilliant father Ted - who created a renter's insurance policy for us not 6 months ago - we have been well cared for by Safeco and were able to quickly get lodging. We are presently staying in a suite at a hotel with kitchen and laundry access for the next two weeks.

Because of some structural damage on our side of the apartment, the exposure of the ceiling is cause for concern about asbestos and lead contaminants. The smoke damage is severe. Because of this, we were unable to take anything from the apartment to use except for important documents, electronics, and quite literally just the clothes on our backs.

We are currently safe and spending the day taking care of what we can - canceling bills, purchasing toiletries and clothing, and starting to put together a plan for the future. Our apartment will not be livable for months, but we both agree we would never be able to live there again. In two weeks we will probably transition to a more permanent rental spot but we haven't worked those details out yet.

We have been so touched by the incredible kindness and support we have received from our coworkers, family and friends. Our hearts have really felt the outpouring of love and we are so glad to have such wonderful supports all around us. We will continue to update everyone with news.

Thank you so much to all for the support, we could not get through this without all of you!

# FAMILY SHORTS



Katy has a new job as the human resources and travel coordinator for Blue Sky Communications, a company that installs, repairs, removes and/or recycles cell towers all over the United States.

She assists in the recruiting, vetting, hiring and orientation of new employees (they have over 50 right now and are growing). Additionally she arranges the travel for the employees to travel throughout the US to their new job locations. We wish Katy well in her new job!



On the same night Bruce was rushed to the hospital, Dustin and Lauren found themselves in a similar predicament with Holden. It seems that Holden had a very bad case of croup and had to go by ambulance to the hospital. Fortunately, Holden is fine and home without even needing to stay longer than it took for the doctors to see him.

Unfortunately, someone stole the diaper bag that Dustin had set next to their car while waiting for the ambulance to arrive. He went back inside to get Holden's inhaler and when he came back out the bag, including his keys and wallet was gone! It was one hard night for the Benesch Family!



Margaret reports that Mike, Ashley and Emily are all doing well. While Mike was suffering a bit from a cold, Ashley has the great immune system that comes from teaching and is sharing it with Emily so they were fine. Bud and Margaret are looking forward to going back in a few weeks.