

Birdy and Bruce Cruise to:

S P E C T A C U L A R A L A S K A



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ALASKA CRUISE ABOARD THE RUBY PRINCESS

By Bruce Hartman



As you all know Birdy and I went to Alaska to enjoy a week-long cruise between July 26th and August 2nd. This trip through the inside passage took us to the Alaskan ports of Ketchikan, Juneau, Skagway and Victoria BC.

It started off with Lyle picking us up at 5:30 in the morning, with coffee in hand, for a ride to the airport. This was quite the sacrifice on Lyle's part since he and Francie just got home from the same Alaska trip the night before. You gotta know that sleeping-in was looking a lot more attractive than schlepping us to the airport at 0-dark-thirty! But we all know that Lyle is a saint and his happy, chipper disposition was awesome as he gave us a few last minute tips en route to the airport.

Thanks to many of you, we flew first class to Seattle. This was our first time to fly first class and admittedly, it was great! They pamper the heck out of you and the seating is sooo much more roomy and comfortable...Thank you to all of you for that!

Once in Seattle we found our way to the luggage drop-off and the buses provided by Princess Cruises and were whisked away to our waiting cruise ship, The Ruby Princess, in the Port of Seattle. We boarded, checked in and were in our room a little before noon.

Our cabin was amazing as compared with most cabins on the ship. It was a huge two-room suite consisting of a living room area, complete with a large balcony, and a bedroom area. The bathroom was ginormous to ac-





commodate a wheelchair in the shower as well as in the bathroom. Birdy had talked me into renting an electric wheelchair for the trip and I am so happy that she did. Francie had done the legwork and found the best rental company to work with while on her trip the week prior... Thanks Francie for the intel! It was delivered to the ship and was waiting for me in the cabin upon our arrival. The room was big enough to use the power chair in the room and do doughnuts without hitting anything. Admittedly, this damned wheelchair made the trip! Without it, and only relying on my folding scooter, would have seriously limited our ability to participate in the many outings and activities. ...Life has changed for the Hartman's where mobility is concerned!



The ship left the pier around 6:00 PM and the eating began...oh wait I meant the fun began. We enjoyed a semi-formal dinner and then gambled in the casino for an hour. We went to bed around 9:00 and got up late (8:00AM) and enjoyed a late breakfast in the cafeteria and a lazy day at sea all day. We gambled for a couple hours on the small \$100 dollar jackpot we hit early-on. It's always more fun to gamble with someone else's money! That night was the first formal dinner and I have to say it was an exceptional steak dinner.

The ship docked and we were ashore in Ketchikan by 9:00AM. We boarded a bus that took us to a 60' tour boat to see bald eagles, lighthouses and totem poles. We were back on board the Ruby Princess by 1:00 and had a less than stellar hamburger for lunch. After that it was time for Foo-Foo drinks and live music followed later by a really crappy dinner in the cafeteria...very disappointing! We waited in the bar / theater for a comedy show to begin but it turned out we had the schedule from the previous





day with us so we were the clueless travelers that day! The food and the entertainment was a bust so we went to bed.

We were up and at 'em by 5:00AM. Birdy wanted to brave the cold so she wrapped up in her jammies, a jacket and two bathrobes as we sat out on our balcony watching the icebergs float by. This is the only morning that we saw significant wildlife. We saw a fairly large pod of killer whales, many many hump back whales and lots of porpoise. It was really only about 45 to 50 degrees...I was in a tee shirt, but if you ask the Bird it was blizzard conditions! We ordered room service as we got ready for the day.



Juneau was the best day of all. We docked by 7:00AM and we got off the boat around 11:00. We started out with a cable tram up the side of the mountain overlooking the harbor. We watched a local native and his son carving a totem and just goofed around for an hour or so. Later we boarded a bus for the Juneau airport where we flew in a helicopter up to the Mendenhall Glacier. They gave us all crampons to wear so you could walk around on the glacier. I struggled with this part of the adventure so I sat in a folding chair in the rain and wind while Birdy did the 30 minute walking tour. Then we were whisked away in the helicopters and back down to Juneau before we knew it! Even Birdy agrees that this was truly a highlight of the trip.



Thursday we enjoyed breakfast in our room again so we could get off the ship early. We had booked a four hour train trip aboard a 100 year old, narrow gauge train through the White Pass. This was a great trip that we enjoyed a lot... the scenery and views were amazing even though it rained all the way up. We actually saw sunshine on the way down but never saw much in the way of wildlife. We toured the huge downtown of Skagway which is six blocks long and three blocks wide. I enjoyed halibut and chips while Birdy had a decadent grilled cheese sandwich at a local pub. After an hour or two of shopping we went back to the ship and enjoyed each other's company playing rummy-500 and more Foo-Foo drinks. We ended the day with a wonderful Alaskan king crab dinner and a fantastic comedy and magician show.

Friday and Saturday were spent, in large part, at sea with a short stop in Victoria BC where we opted to stay on board. Most of the "at sea" time was spent being a little lazy. We had a few more hours of fun in the casino and won a couple hundred bucks, ate way too much, listened to live music and fed our livers a diet of cocktails and wine.



We docked in Seattle early and were off the ship and on a bus by 8:00AM headed for the airport. We killed several hours at the airport and finally boarded our flight around 2:00PM and landed in San Diego at 5:00PM. After a quick Uber ride home we unpacked, started a load of laundry and relaxed...nothing better than getting into your own bed!





All in all we had a great time! Birdy asked me when we got home; if I knew then what I know now would I want to do this trip. Most certainly! This has always been on my “bucket list” so I am really happy and fortunate to have been able to do this. We have spoiled ourselves over the years with many great trips to Europe where we have always set our own schedules and were able to enjoy a more up close and personal relationship with the locals. The cruise ship life is a very different experience. When you go ashore you do so with 3000 others from your ship as well as

the other ships docked at the same port, completely taking over the town or village you are visiting, so the experience is very different. I’m really happy to have made this trip with my bride of 36 years making yet another wonderful set of memories in our lives together.



Hawaii

Hartman Style

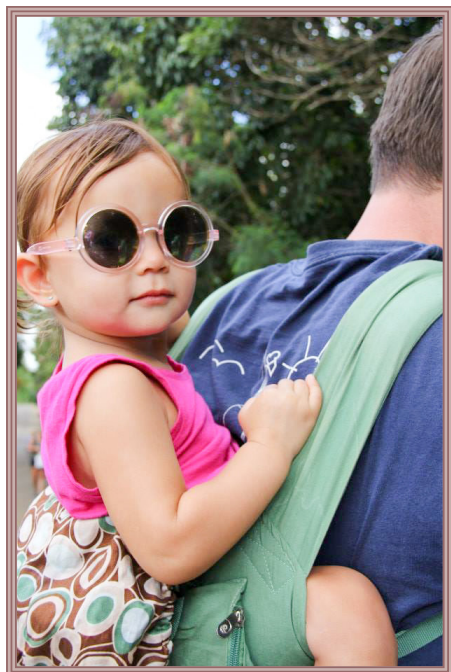


Craig and Ana with the rest of the family in tow (including Grandma Birdy) spent just over a week in the tropics of Hawaii last month. Birdy, using the time as a tune up (or should we say warm up) for her trip to Alaska and provided many great shots of the trip.

Josie also celebrated her 2nd birthday on the island state, as they spent the day looking at waterfalls, driving through jungles, playing on the beach, then finished it with cake and ice cream. As Ana put it “Two in Kauai is just about as good as it gets!”

During their stay they: hiked a gorgeous trail to two waterfalls including one that was in Jurassic Park; found some rainbow eucalyptus on their walk to the playground; swam, strolled, relaxed and played on the beaches; posed for pictures for grandma (lots of them); ate lots of ice cream; and in general, had just about the best time a family could have.

Unfortunately, like all vacations it was over too soon and they had to say goodbye to their tropical paradise and return home to... well almost as nice, San Diego. Vacations come and go but the memories last a lifetime. Not just for the parents but also the kids. From these outings kids learn about family bonds and the tradition of family vacations. Someday, not too far off in the future, we will be reading about their vacations with their kids, who will be calling Craig and Ana, Grandpa and Grandma... Time really does roll on.





Adventures in

By Francie Sorem

WALT DISNEY WORLD

In early May, Lyle, Myself, Boone and Cindy headed off for some

R&R at The Walt Disney World Resort, informally known as Walt

Disney World or simply Disney World or shortly WDW. For those of you who have never been there it is an entertainment complex in Lake Buena Vista Florida, near Kissimmee Florida and is the flagship of Disney's worldwide theme park empire. The resort opened on October 1, 1971 and, is the most visited vacation resort in the world, with an attendance of over 52 million annually.

Disney World is owned and operated by Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, a division of The Walt Disney Company. The property covers 27,258 acres (43 sq mi), in which it houses 27 themed resort hotels, 9 non-Disney hotels, four theme parks, two water parks, four golf courses, one nine-hole walking golf course for young golfers (no electric carts allowed), two themed miniature golf courses, one camping resort (rest assured I did not stay there), and other entertainment venues.

The Magic Kingdom was the first and original theme park to open in the complex followed by Epcot, Disney Hollywood Studios, and Disney's Animal Kingdom, which opened later throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Designed to supplement Disneyland in Anaheim, California, which had opened in 1955, the complex was developed in the 1960s. "The Florida Project", as he called it, was originally to be built in hopes of differential in design and scheme from Disneyland with its own diverse set of rides. Walt Disney's original plans also called for the inclusion of an "Experimental prototype Community of Tomorrow" a planned community that would serve as a test bed for new innovations for city living. After extensive lobbying, the Government of Florida created the Reedy Creek Improvement District, a special Government district that essentially gave The Walt Disney Company the standard powers and autonomy of an incorporated city... However, Disney died on December 15, 1966, before construction began. Without the mind of Disney spearheading the construction of Walt Disney World, the Disney Company instead created the resort very similar to Disneyland, just on a much larger scale, along with abandoning his concept of an experimental planned community.

This was a step back in our memories to when Cindy and I as youngsters, grew up on the Disney concept of entertainment. We still are fascinated by it today and had a great time visiting 5 parks (including Universal Studios) in three days. Lucky for us, school was not out yet in that area so the lines were not too long and we got a lot done in a short amount of time.

Coincidentally, you might like to know that Disneyland is in Orange County in California and Walt Disney World is in Orange County in Florida. In case you are interested here is a little history on this park

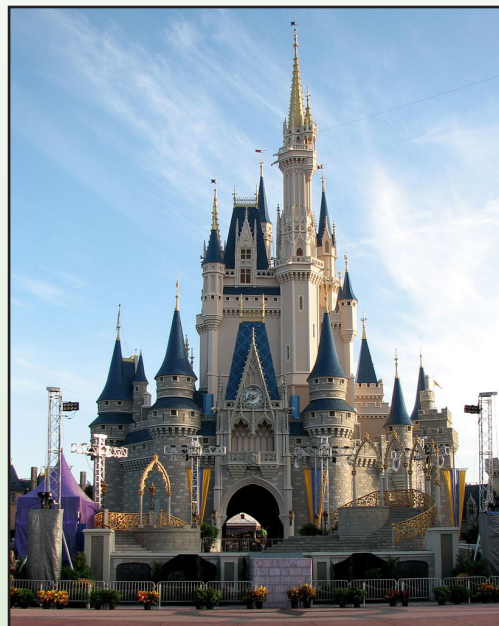
In 1959, Walt Disney Productions began looking for land for a second park to supplement Disneyland, which opened in Anaheim, California, in 1955. Market surveys revealed that only 5% of Disneyland's visitors came from east of the Mississippi River, where 75% of the population of the United States lived. Additionally, Walt Disney disliked the businesses that had sprung up around Disneyland and wanted control of a much larger area of land for the new project.

Walt Disney flew over the Orlando-area site (one of many) in November 1963. Seeing the well-developed network of roads, including the planned Interstate 4 and Florida's Turnpike, with McCoy Air Force Base (later Orlando International Airport) to the east, Disney selected a centrally located site near Bay Lake. To avoid a burst of land speculation, Walt Disney World Company used various dummy corporations to acquire 27,443 acres (43 sq. mi) of land. In May 1965, some of these major land transactions were recorded a few miles southwest of Orlando in Osceola County. Also, two large tracts totaling \$1.5 million were sold, and smaller tracts of flatlands and cattle pastures were purchased by exotic-sounding companies such as the "Latin-American Development and Management Corporation" and the "Reedy Creek Ranch Corporation"; some of these names are now memorialized on a window above Main Street, U.S.A. in the Magic Kingdom. In addition to three huge parcels of land were many smaller parcels, called "outs". Much of the land acquired had been platted into 5 acres lots in 1912 by the Munger Land Company and sold to investors. Most owners were happy to get rid of the land, which was mostly swamp. Another issue was the mineral rights to the land, which were owned by Tufts University. Without the transfer of these rights, Tufts could come



in at any time and demand the removal of buildings to obtain minerals. Eventually, Disney's team negotiated a deal with Tufts to buy the mineral rights for \$15,000.

Working under a strict cloak of secrecy, real estate agents who did not know the identity of their client began making offers to landowners in southwest Orange and northwest Osceola counties in April 1964, shortly after Walt Disney chose the site for his new theme park. Careful not to let property owners know the extent of their land-buying appetites, the agents quietly negotiated one deal after another, sometimes lining up contracts to buy huge tracts for little more than \$100 an acre. Because they knew that recording the first deeds would trigger intense public questioning about what was going on, Disney's representatives waited until they had a large number of parcels locked up through options before filing their paperwork.



Meanwhile, a rumor had popped up in California that Disney had his eye on Orlando. On May 20, an Orlando Sentinel article acknowledged the persistent rumor that "the land is being purchased for a second East Coast Disneyland attraction", but the paper discounted the gossip, because Disney had specifically denied it when interviewed during a visit to Cape Kennedy. Disney lied in telling the newspaper he was spending \$50 million to expand Disneyland in California and was

not interested in another such venture at that time. The first purchases, recorded on May 3, 1965, included one for 8,380 acres (13 sq mi) of swamp and brush from state Senator Irlo Bronson. The deal had been made seven months earlier. The first newspaper account of the large-scale interest in Orange and Osceola county property ran the next day. The May 4 Orlando Sentinel story said the transactions “will undoubtedly increase rumors already afloat for the past year to the effect that a new and large industrial complex is about to locate in this area.”

Because of the proximity to Cape Kennedy, much early speculation centered on space or aircraft technology, according to anthropologist Stephen M. Fjellman in his 1992 book *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America*. Carmakers' names, especially Ford, also were mentioned. Speculation during the summer about the identity of the buyer included the Rockefellers, Howard Hughes and NASA's Manned Orbiting Laboratory Project.

One day while Hinson was putting out the Evening Star, Andersen's afternoon paper, he got a phone call from a friend who said he had been in the office of a New York public relations firm and had been told the firm was helping Disney plan a big development near Orlando. This story was quickly suppressed.

Within three weeks of recording the Bronson transaction, Florida Ranch Lands had wrapped up deals with 47 owners. Eventually, the firm negotiated agreements with 51 owners to buy 27,443 acres (43 sq. mi) for more than \$5 million, an average price of \$182 per acre. Disney wanted to announce his ownership of the land and his plans for Walt Disney World on November 15, 1965, but the secret was divulged earlier than that, when, in October

1965, Emily Bavar, editor of the Sentinel's Florida magazine, was in Anaheim for Disneyland's 10th anniversary celebration. During an interview with Walt Disney, Bavar asked whether he was buying up vast acreage in Central Florida. Disney was caught unawares, and Bavar suspected that the rumor was true. Therefore, on October 21, 1965, a story by Bavar, written in the first person and acknowledging that she was sticking her neck out, predicted Disney would build a new theme park on the huge tract. After piecing together more information from various sources, the paper led its Sunday edition three days later with a story headlined, “We Say: ‘Mystery Industry’ Is Disney”.



Disney allowed Governor Haydon Burns to confirm the next day, October 25, that he intended to build “the greatest attraction in the history of Florida” in Central Florida. Disney came in person to Orlando for the formal announcement with Burns on November 15. Disney explained the plans for the site, including Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow, (EPCOT), also known as Progress City, was to be a futuristic planned city. He envisioned a working city with commercial and residential areas that also continued to showcase and test new ideas and concepts for urban living.

Walt Disney died from lung cancer on December 15, 1966, before his vision was realized. His brother and business partner, Roy O. Disney, postponed his retirement to oversee construction of the resort's first phase.



On February 2, 1967, Roy O. Disney held a press conference at the Park Theatres in Winter Park, Florida. The role of EPCOT was emphasized in the film that was played. After the film, it was explained that for Disney World, including EPCOT, to succeed, a special district would have to be formed: the Reedy Creek Improvement District with two cities inside it, Bay Lake and Reedy Creek, now Lake Buena Vista. In addition to the standard powers of an incorporated city, which include the issuance of tax-free bonds, the district would have immunity from any current or future county or state land-use laws. The only areas where the district had to submit to the county and state would be property taxes and elevator inspections. The legislation forming the district and the two cities was signed into law by Florida Governor Claude R. Kirk, Jr. on May 12, 1967. The Supreme Court of Florida then ruled in 1968 that the district was allowed to issue tax-exempt bonds for public projects within the district, despite the sole beneficiary being Walt Disney Productions.

The district soon began construction of drainage canals, and Disney built the first roads and the Magic Kingdom. The Contemporary Resort Hotel, the Polynesian Village and Fort Wilderness were also completed in time for the park's opening

on October 1, 1971. The Palm and Magnolia golf courses near Magic Kingdom had opened a few weeks before. At the park's opening, Roy O. Disney dedicated the property and declared that it would be known as "Walt Disney World" in his brother's honor. In his own words: "Everyone has heard of Ford cars. But have they all heard of Henry Ford, who started it all? Walt Disney World is in memory of the man who started it all, so people will know his name as long as Walt Disney World is here." After the dedication, Roy Disney asked Walt's widow, Lillian what she thought of Walt Disney World. According to biographer Bob Thomas, she responded, "I think Walt would have approved." Roy O. Disney died on December 20, 1971, less than three months after the property opened.

Much of Walt Disney's plans for his Progress City were abandoned after his death, after the company board decided that it did not want to be in the business of running a city. The concept evolved into the resort's second theme park, EPCOT Center (renamed Epcot in 1996), which opened in 1982. While still emulating Walt Disney's original idea of showcasing new technology, it is closer to a world's fair than a "community of tomorrow". Some of the urban planning concepts from the original idea of EPCOT would instead be integrated into the community of Celebration much later. The resort's third theme park, Disney-MGM Studio (renamed Disney's Hollywood Studios in 2008), opened in 1989, and is inspired by show business. The resort's fourth theme park, Disney's Animal Kingdom, opened in 1998.





Bet 'ya didn't know!

Let me preface this by saying I am not sniveling! I have been asked by many that see me every day what it's like having this disease. My friends and colleagues at work see my de-

cline and struggles and ask me why I don't just hang it up and go on disability. So... I thought I might share my daily challenges and try to explain why I do what I do because I bet 'ya didn't know!

Mornings are a difficult part of my day. I run fevers most every night and I wake up every morning with the same symptoms you would feel if you had the flu. On top of that, pain in some of the affected muscles is at its highest levels when I get out of bed so the simple tasks of brushing teeth, combing hair and getting dressed are a struggle most days. I find myself sitting on the side of the bed staring and wondering how I'm going to get through today. When I finally get the last shoe on and wallet, keys and cell phone in the right pockets I am huffing and puffing and headed for the kitchen with a laser like focus on getting to my drugs. My morning regimen consists of 36 pills and 2 injections. Most important to me in that cocktail are pain meds and anti-inflammatory meds because without them, walking much more than across the house is leaning toward unthinkable.

An hour after I take my meds I begin to feel like I can get through the day. Another half hour, at 6:30, it is time to get to work. Walking is still a bit challenging at this time, so getting out to my truck and walking from my truck to my office can be excruciating in my lower back and my knees. Often I have to stop halfway to catch my breath and recover some muscle at my waiting scooter even though the entire distance is less than a hundred yards. As silly as this may sound, I face a difficult decision every morning as I enter the office. Because of the diuretics I take, my bladder is ready to explode by the time I get to work but my back and legs can't hold me up any longer. Generally, I make it to my office for a short rest and then to the bathroom. There are those days that my bladder can't wait and I head straight for the restroom. Sometimes, as emasculating as it may be, I just have to give up and sit down to pee so that I won't fall down...it just sucks that something as simple as needing to pee turns into a "life decision" before I even start my day at work. But finally, after the dreaded walk to my office, I am able to hunker down and after five or ten minutes of recovery I am ready for the day.

The diuretics that I take for heart failure and kidney insufficiency force me to get up and shuffle to the restroom

every 15 minutes for the first five to six hours of my day. This can be a problem when I have meetings scheduled, so I scrutinize my calendar every morning to see if I need to postpone diuretics that day... To pee or not to pee...some of the silly things I have to consider that most other people do not.

Lunch meetings, site walks, jobsite visits and customer meetings are especially challenging for me and are still an important part of my job. Accessible parking helps and hauling my scooter to some places is acceptable, albeit a pain in the ass. These sorts of things also force me into more medication decisions to strike balance between my medical needs and my work needs. I take very strong narcotic pain meds throughout the day to stay ahead of the pain. When I need to be off-site for meetings or site visits I have to remain sharp so I don't like to take the pain meds. This creates more problems for me later and the pain becomes more of an issue to manage. Late dosing makes for sleep issues and sleep issues feed into more problems. As often as I can, I have one of my managers go in my place but that can't always happen. That's when Birdy's saying "suck it up Buttercup" comes to mind and I do just that! Most people enjoy going to lunch...I dread it! Travel is no longer something I can do without Birdy to help me so the three or four annual Caterpillar conferences and meetings in Peoria, Lafayette, Las Vegas etc, which I used to go to, now require that I send one of my guys to represent Hawthorne and bring the info back. I miss that travel because of the networking that took place with my counterparts from the other 66 Cat dealers across the country...but I know my limitations.

If I were to list all the muscle groups and organs affected by this disease it might surprise you. Most affected are my heart, low back, legs and shoulders. The muscles called erector spinae are the three big muscles connected to the spine that allow us to stand erect. Mine were cut away from the spine when they cut the back half of 10 of my vertebrae off and what's left of the muscle is now diseased. This makes standing for more than about a minute a bitch! My quadriceps (thighs) are also diseased so I am getting weaker and a bit wobbly. Standing up from a chair gets to be harder and harder to do. My diaphragm, chest wall and abdominals are diseased so breathing is affected and being able to push in the poop department is becoming more difficult. You wouldn't think taking a dump could leave you winded! Shoulders, pecs, hands and fingers are losing to this disease. I struggle with picking up small things like pills and I drop stuff all the time. Buttons and zippers are nearly impossible so I slip my pants on and off already buttoned and zipped...I have given up on using a

urinal in public restrooms since I can't stand long enough anyway. I think if you ask the guy next to you to zip you up you might get the crap beat out of you so using a stall with hand rails seems to be a better option for me. Can you just picture a 57 year old man standing at a urinal, bare assed, with his pants down around his ankles...Not exactly a Norman Rockwell moment! Facial muscles are also being attacked by this unrelenting bastard of a disease. Chewing, and to some extent, swallowing are affected. It gets very painful in my jaw muscles and neck when chewing things like rolled tacos, pizza, steak etc. I often have trouble swallowing and things go down the wrong pipe. It's as if I can't find or control the right muscles temporarily and it all gets stuck. My eyes are also impacted despite the multiple surgeries. Double vision and bulging eyes are just some of the fun! My heart is a real challenge. The heart muscle itself is diseased so I have both right and left sided heart failure as a result of cardiomyopathy. This makes for shortness of breath and fluid retention among other problems. Fluid management is a daily struggle and I fluctuate as much as 30 and 40 pounds in a matter of a few days when I make poor choices like salty french fries, deli meats or pizza (stuff I love). Things can quickly spiral out of control and go into renal failure and end up having to go to the ER and ultimately a 3 day hospital stay...not fun! You can probably deduce that the old "love muscle" isn't exactly up to par... the little blue pills don't work anymore but since what it's connected to is pretty much junk it wouldn't matter anyway! Don't give me crap about TMI...it is just part of life, a simple matter of fact and just one more of the many frustrations that I live with.

Decisions I make with meds have a profound effect on sleep. Pain killers and prednisone cause me not to sleep so the time of day and dosage play a huge role in all of that. Many nights I am only able to sleep an hour or two and sometimes not at all. Pain, muscle cramps, peeing and racing heart rates complicate my sleep patterns. I feel fortunate when I can fall back to sleep and pick up an additional hour or two and incredibly fortunate when out of the blue I sleep 5 or 6 hours straight. I use prescription sleeping pills as little as possible because they can be so addictive. I recently got a medical marijuana card and occasionally smoke a little pot to get caught up on sleep but any and all sleep aids tend to leave me heavy-headed in the mornings and when you already don't want to get up because of pain and generally feeling crappy, a heavy head is begging for a reason to stay home... and I just can't do that!

By about 3:00 in the afternoon I generally "hit the wall." I'm exhausted from poor sleep, internally fighting disease and dealing with pain. My body is screaming for rest in the late afternoon. I push through the last couple of hours of the day and can't wait until I get home. All I want to do is to shower and put on my PJ's...I dread the thought of the phone ringing, talking to anyone or the idea of going anywhere...I just want to die for a few hours. It is a deep, down-to-the-bone exhaustion that is hard to describe. The challenge with this is that life goes on! What I want to do is completely incompatible with the rest of the world. So again...Birdy's famous words come to mind "suck it up But-

tercup" and I look to the medicine cabinet for a little relief or just draw on whatever is left in my energy reserves to go a little longer. I hate being the party pooper more than anything...

What drives me to keep doing this is the fear that as soon as I stop pushing myself I will deteriorate at a much faster rate and become truly "handicapped" and a burden to Birdy and everyone else. That day is coming soon enough and I want to kick that sucker down the road as far and as long as possible. Getting out of bed in the morning and forcing myself to put one foot in front of the other is a huge part of psychologically beating this beast and anything less is just giving up...and I'm not a quitter! I don't ever want one of my kids to have to wipe my butt and I will do everything I can to ensure that never happens! That, in and of itself, is a big motivator to keep on going!

So far, I remain very effective in my job. For the last seven years my service departments have been the highest producing and highest profit producing in all of the Hawthorne companies including Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, Saipan and the mother-ship in Rancho Bernardo. I recently learned that my 40 technicians not only enjoy the notoriety of having the highest technician productivity statistics in the Hawthorne enterprise but, according to Caterpillar dealer statistics, my little rag-tag bunch of guys are the most productive group, based on metrics including profit per employee and technician productivity, in the entire country as compared with all the service departments in all 66 North American Cat dealers. Of course I'm proud of that fact, but the point is not to brag, but rather, this is something that is critical for me to keep an eye on and to remain introspective. When I no longer feel that I am contributing at a high level, it will be time for me to re-evaluate what I am doing. Until that time, this is some of the strongest medicine that keeps me getting out of bed every day.

I won't lie; there are many days I want to just give up! The scooter(s) help me a lot but I know that damned wheelchair is creeping closer... and that pisses me off! I start feeling sorry for myself from time to time, especially when I haven't had any sleep, pain is getting to be too much and the demands at work are high. Megan Rehwald recently told me this was a good thing because I need to get better at asking for help and letting people help me. She is right (and that pisses me off too...damned kids are too wise for their own good) but that is an area I struggle with. I have always been self sufficient and asking for help is just not in my wheelhouse. Life deals us some unfair crap from time to time that makes us have to adapt. I will adapt but not without a fight. I'm so lucky to have Birdy...she keeps me going and helps in ways she doesn't even know are helpful beyond the obvious laundry, trash and cleaning up after me. I try hard not to ask for much and strive to remain self sufficient... but I know I'm a pain in the ass...she just does stuff for me all the time! I'm pretty dang lucky! ...And this is just some of the crap in my world that I bet 'ya didn't know.

FAMILY SHORTS



As many of you already know, Jessica and the kids have been spending the summer here while Miguel is still hard at work back in New Jersey (he does join the family when he has a few day in

a row off). This provided a great opportunity for the Benesch clan to hold a family day at Sea World. As can be seen here it looks like all of them had a great time.



Brian has big news! He and Drew have become engaged! Drew asked him during a trip to Las Vegas and of course, Brian said yes. Above is a picture of Brian's engagement ring. They haven't formally announced a date or a place yet but there are some rumors going around that the wedding will be held in San Diego about a year from now.

David Lane has started a new sports fad on the east coast, Baby Tossing! As can be seen here with his record toss of over 10' he is setting the bar for fathers all over the world. OK not really, in fact, he was saving Owen from falling out of a tree... oh you don't buy that one either? Well let's just say they were having a great time at the beach on a very nice summer day!



Once plans have been firmed up, we will have that information for you. Until then we want to congratulate the new couple and welcome Drew into the "Royal Order of the Innocent Bystanders".

Kevin and Nicole took Blake out to the old ball game on Saturday, August the 8th and enjoyed a Padres game. Unfortunately the Padre's lost but Blake didn't mind, just being with Mom and Dad was good enough for him. Grandpa Frank must be happy that his love of baseball has been passed on to, not only his grandchildren, but also the great grandkids as well.

