

# Epics from Marie's Life's Journey

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## Ray's Journey

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Dear ,

It is August 18 and "Thank the Lord," we are now on our long but positive part of our journey. Operations are over, blood sugar has leveled out, blood pressure is 114/70, and therapy is well on the way.

We have living with us Shivaun, Brenda and Greg, all who want only God's will for their lives. They are like angels, and everything Ray fought against he is finding a comforting blessing. He gets up three times a day for meals and a walk in his wheelchair. His therapy is still in bed. Friday he will try walking on one prosthesis with a walker. It is a challenge but he seems ready to meet the challenge. The therapist said it will take a year before he walks with no limp — no cane.

My real reason for writing is to let you know that your support was surely one of the contributing factors in Ray's recovery. Our dear friends all seemed to be cheering him on as he kept going down, rising and going down again. He beat all odds. God surely has a reason for sparing his life.

Do you want to hear a capsulated story of Ray's journey from old life to death and into new life? "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, lo, He is with us."

At about 2:00 a.m. on April 11, Easter Sunday, Ray awakened me to tell me he couldn't breathe. His lungs were full of water. John, Kris's husband was with us from Colorado. I ran downstairs and told him to go by Ray while I called 911. Within 1/2 hour he was in emergency at Hoag Hospital. From then on the glory of God shown round about him, and one part of him (his old man) went through heart

failure, kidney failure, and stomach failure; everything shut down, but his spirit and new man started emerging. In the early hours of the morning of April 13, he asked me to pray with him and I told him to pray along with me. After we finished, he said, "Oh, thank you for helping me find my place in the Rock." Well in prayer we had never called Jesus "the Rock", so I knew he was speaking from his own experience.

Then he began like a sage of old, giving us counsel on our Colorado property. He said he and Doug would be ranch hands working together. He wanted to get out of bed and warn the people that we are headed into something great and terrible but he said no one was prepared nor would they understand, for they had all left the living God. He said Piecemakers would understand, so I called Anne and Doug and they came up to the hospital about 2:00 a.m. He said, "I think I'm going to leave you all. God's calling me." Anne said, "No, Ray," and he said, "Don't say that, Anne." His spiritual death to that old Catholic stubborn man was so real he kept thinking he was dying physically. He made the nurse pull all the machines. He told the nurses to thank God daily because their job was given to them by God. He said the city of Costa Mesa knew we (Piecemakers) were God's people and we should be sure we represented Him as He is. He told about people who called him trying to convince him that I was leading people astray. To my surprise, he told them I was walking with the true God and not to concern themselves about the rest of the Piecemakers.

Well, what went on from 2:00 a.m. until 6:00 a.m. was a story written in the heavens. At 4:00 a.m., Mike came in and Ray said, "Mike, I'm leaving.

Don't feel bad. Be sure and thank God for your little business and talk often to Him and listen to Him." Mike kept saying through tears, "Yes, Pops, I understand, Pops." Ray said, "Hug me, Mike," and Mike fell into his arms. When Ray pulled through and didn't die, Mike said (like only Mike can,) "I'm going to kick his ass when he gets out for putting me through that awful time."

Kris came home from Colorado when his kidneys started failing and then one thing after another happened. First his right leg was cut off below the knee. His back caused him more problems than anything else. His ruptured disc was so bad morphine didn't touch the pain.

He began to rally, never really coming all the way back to life. We went to the Mesa Verde Convalescence Hospital to recover. When I say we, I mean just that. We had private rooms, and for four months we lived in hospitals. We both had more ambulance rides than any family has in a lifetime, from Mesa Verde to Hoag to the pain clinic for epidurals for his back. He was too sick to operate on.

One day we said to the doctors, "You have to operate. If he dies, he dies. He can't stay in this pain forever." So after a week at Hoag, the doctors, after warning us about his slim chances, operated. Time passed that day. We knew if he made it through the first hour of anesthesia, he'd live. He went in at 8:30 and at 4:00, out came Ray. Marj (our daughter) stayed all day, and Babe and Chris, my sister and niece, came, too, to say "hi" as they wheeled him into I.C.U.

After another week at Hoag (I won't go into detail of the two week ordeal) we went back to Mesa Verde where his other foot began deteriorating and rotting away. So back to Hoag and another amputation. This left him without a sound voice — no appetite, gagging when he ate, and very weak. After a week we took him home to recover where the dogs, the grandkids, a couple from Germany and their two little angels filled the house. And here he began to improve. How fun to hear him say, "This

smoothie tastes good." Or suddenly to hear his natural voice or see him turn over by himself in bed.

Little by little God is restoring him — his very nature transformed as he is forced to have patience, to say "thank you." He is forced to become humble as he needs others to assist him. Too bad he was forced into doing what Christ came to help us do, i.e., get rid of our proud, independent, arrogant life and take on His gentle nature. However, Ray said, "A leg is a small price to pay to gain eternal life." He also said, "Now I know why they call sick people patients (patience)."

On Saturday night, August 7, we all gathered around two tables in our family room. It was Ray, myself and our extended family, Brenda, Shivaun, John and Leslie Mackie from Germany with their two children, Jill and John Ryan — and then people we had never met but God brought to our table, friends of John and Leslie, Mark, Pat and four-year old, Anne. We all bowed our heads and gave thanks to God for Ray's survival and future recovery. The glory of the Lord hovered over us. Nine-year old John Ryan, who had never sensed God's presence, said, "Where are the hidden cameras? Surely someone is making a movie of us."

What a peaceful, quiet dinner! No whooping, no drinking, bowed hearts before the Lord, thankful for things we take for granted.

Well, dear friends, your prayers and really truthful wishes for him were the best medicine.

This past five months I can honestly say have been the best time of my life. I think Ray would agree. After every meal we go for a rather long walk. There is always an entourage, which of course, includes Freckles, our little cute Cocker.

Our place in Ridgway, Colorado, is beginning to hum with activity. There are twelve in the house at present. The house is huge with deer all around, mountains on all sides with a river running through it. Ridgway is a small town. The men have all found work and the women are busy baking bread,

gardening, and keeping house. They went to one craft show and have two more lined up. It's a perfect place for our young men to go and learn how to build, tile and farm. You are all welcome to come and enjoy it with us.

**“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”**

*Marie*