

Give Me One More Shot

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Prior to September of 2012 my life was typical. I was 54 years old, married, and always had an excuse as to why I had not quit smoking or gotten any exercise, except for square dancing, which I love to do. You would think I should have feared dying from a smoking related disease because my father died from emphysema at age 69 and my mother died from lung cancer at age 70. I had told people that I fully expected to die the same way. I was just hoping to live to 71 years old so I could outlive my parents. It's not that I liked smoking so much but it was more that I had tried to quit and couldn't so I figured it was my lot in life. Oh, how wrong I was!

On September 5, 2012, life as I know it changed forever and I was given a second chance, one more shot if you will. I suffered a sudden cardiac arrest at home and at that time my chances of survival were only 2-3 percent. Thanks to my wife, Debbie, who started the CPR and to a group of police officers, paramedics and the ER staff who did not give up, I am alive and doing well.

I am alive because of God. I figured out a while ago that there is a book of life and everyone's name is in it and when it's your time, you're going. I know it sounds rather simplistic and please remember that this is only my opinion. I will leave the debate over life and death to greater minds than mine. One of the things I have carried with me since my cardiac arrest is that a friend of mine, Barb, sent me an email sometime after I had woken up from my coma that said in part, "God was not ready for you and the Devil was afraid you would take over so you came back to us"

If you asked 100 Sudden Cardiac Arrest survivors to tell you their story you would get 100 different stories and yet there is a common theme. Most will tell you that we have spent some time "Wondering Why Me?" but mostly we are eternally grateful for one more shot at life.

Chapter 1

Wednesday September 5, 2012

18:30-18:33 Hours Bloomington, MN

Dispatch: Bloomington 911

Answer: Yes, I just came in from watering the tree. My husband's lying on the floor.

D: Okay is he injured?

A: I don't know, I was outside.

D: Okay

A: He doesn't answer

D: Okay, is he conscious?

A: He doesn't seem to be, he isn't breathing

D: Okay, he's breathing though?

A: Yes

D: How old is your husband?

A: He is 54

D: Okay, where in the house are you

A: I'm in the kitchen, if you enter the door beside the driveway rather than the front door.

D: is the door by the driveway?

A: yes

D: Okay, stay on the line with me, okay, I'm going to transfer you over to the ambulance, okay?

A: Okay

Ambulance Company: Ambulance

Dispatch: All Right, Bloomington here, Ma'am hold off one second okay?

Answer: Okay

D: a 54-year-old male who is lying on the floor, he's unconscious but breathing, he'll be in the kitchen, I have his wife on the line and she said if you use the door by the driveway as opposed to the front door that will be easier.

AC: Okay, hello Ma'am

A: Yes

AC: This is the ambulance company, tell me everything that happened

A: Okay, we had just gotten home from his haircut; I was outside getting the sprinkler on a tree in our yard, so I was not in the house at the time

AC: Okay

A: I came in the house and found him lying on his back on the floor in the kitchen

AC: Okay, are you with him right now

A: yes

AC: how old is he?

A: 54

AC: is he awake?

A: no he is not

AC: is he breathing

A: slightly, yes

AC: Okay, listen to me, this is very important okay?

A: Okay

AC: Tell me every time he takes a breath

A: Okay

AC: Okay, starting now. Did he breathe at all ma'am?

A: No, he did not

AC: Okay, we need to get him on his back RIGHT NOW!

A: Yeah, he's on his back

AC: Okay, I'm going to walk you through CPR, Okay?

A: Okay

AC: is there a defibrillator available?

A: No

AC: Okay, All Right I need you to kneel next to him, okay?

A: Okay

AC: I need you to look for anything in his mouth. Is there anything in his mouth?

A: No

AC: Now place your hand in the center of his chest and put your other hand on top of the first then you will push down firmly two inches with the heel of your lower hand touching the chest.

A: Okay

AC: Okay, now listen carefully, pump the chest hard and fast, at least twice per second, we're gonna do this until help arrives and we do have help on the way

A: Okay

AC: All right ma'am, begin, count out loud for me

A: 3,4,5.....44, 45,46

AC: you're doing a good job, keep going, you're helping him. Ma'am?

A: yes

AC: are you still doing it?

A: Yes, I am

AC: Okay, count out loud for me

A: 1,2,3.....13, they're here, 14, 15

AC Are they there?

A: yes

AC: Okay, continue until they take over for you

End of call

At 18:33 hours the first police officer arrived with an AED. The ambulance with paramedics was dispatched at 18:32. By 18:37 I had the paramedics, three police officers and a supervisor from Alina Health at the house.

When the first officer arrived, they took over the CPR and when everyone was there they took over using a combination of CPR, the paddles and the Lucas Machine to get my heart beating again.

One of the police officers had Debbie outside and by then our neighbors had come over to see what the excitement was, it's not every day that we have three police cars and an ambulance at someone's house on our block. Debbie was also a little worried about our 2 cats and would they get out. It turns out they were hiding in the basement. Now, Debbie's Mom, had come over to drive her to the hospital and my church had been notified and they were sending someone from the staff to the hospital.

Debbie tells me she had no idea how much time was spent on me (as it turns out it was about 20 minutes) but at some point, she heard someone in the house yell: "I've got a pulse" which she tells me she was happy to hear that.

At 18:58 hours I was loaded into the ambulance for the 3-mile ride to Fairview Southdale Hospital. We pulled in at 19:09. My heart was very weak but I was still alive.

Chapter 2

Email

Date: Thursday September 6, 2012

From Dee

To Square Dance News

Subject: Prayers Needed for Brian Freed

Last night Debbie found Brian "out" on the kitchen floor. They are not sure if he had a heart attack or a cardiac arrest. Below is what she wrote when she got home from the hospital after midnight.

"Hello Dee: I am back home now, Brian is in the ICU at Fairview Southdale Hospital, his heart is very weak but he is holding his own right now but the next 24 hours will be critical. They are cooling his body down to around 33 degrees Celsius, this is to prevent any further damage to his brain or organs. We do not know how long he was without oxygen so that's a question we can't answer right now.

Right now, I am going to be at the hospital a lot so email will be spotty. I will either call you or email you an update sometime today. Right now, he needs lots of prayers so any and all are appreciated".

Debbie

We pulled into Fairview Southdale Hospital ER at 19:09. I was hanging on but it turns out just barely. I flat lined on them once at the house just as they had gotten my heart started. In the ambulance, I flat lined again so they had to shock me back to a normal sinus rhythm. Once at the ER I flat lined for a third time. I am thinking about this time I was trying my best to check out of this life and on to the next but God was not giving in so quick, they hit me with the paddles again and I went back to a normal sinus rhythm. From the ER, I made a trip to the Cath Lab where the team swung into action and they got me stabilized and inserted a camera to check for damage. A team of 4-5 people including the doctor work in the Cath Lab. There they can handle pretty much everything related to the heart except maybe full out open heart surgery. Since time is such an important factor when it comes to a cardiac arrest (or a heart attack), the cath labs are usually located right next to the emergency rooms. At Fairview Southdale Hospital they have two cath labs, staffed 24/7.

They could not find any damage to heart with the camera so they sent me off to get an MRI and from there it was back down to the emergency room where at some point they put me on the Artic Sun machine. The Artic Sun is a machine that cools your body to around 33 degrees Celsius. This is to help prevent further damage to the organs including the brain. Since they did not know how long I had been without oxygen they were taking no chances.

All this time Debbie, her mom and Diane Waarvik, who is the Director of Congregational Care Ministries, at our church had been waiting in the emergency room. I have been told that at times updates about what was happening to me were not always easy to come by. I can maybe understand because, depending on the staff levels, they do not have one person to be with every family but I can also see where this is an issue for family when all they want is an update, even if it's "no change".

They let my family know that I was on my way up to the 3rd floor intensive care unit (ICU). The staff let Debbie know that I was in an induced coma and they had given me Propofol (hey, just like Michael Jackson) and some medicine to paralyze me so I would not shiver too much while on the Arctic Sun. They let her know I would be in this state for about 24 hours. I was still not out of the woods but I had not flat lined on them since the ER so they thought my heart had settled down. Debbie and her mom left but Debbie was going to come back and be with me. And while I didn't know it yet, the prayers had started.

Chapter 3

Email

From Debbie

To: Ken

Subject: Update on Brian

Date: Saturday September 8, 2012

"Good Morning,

Brian had a good morning yesterday (Friday September 7). He was warmed gradually and became conscious about 8:30 AM. He couldn't talk with the breathing tube still in, but he could understand what we said. He was able to follow commands and turned in my direction when asked. He seemed to recognize my voice. He was taken off the paralytic medication so he could move around some in the

bed. This got rid of one IV. The EEG Ladies came and installed all the sensors on his head to look for brain waves. After the neurologist looked at the readouts, he said there was no damage to the brain. The EEG sensors came off again yesterday. The cooling/warming machine was also taken from the room yesterday. A few more things off Brian. He has been sedated, but not as much as in the past. The nurses were able to move around some of the IV's. They installed a PICC line in his left shoulder that allowed them to move the IV's from his groin area to the arm. This will give him much more freedom of movement.

After supertime, last night, we tried lowering the respirator level in hopes of removing the breathing tube. Unfortunately, Brian wouldn't listen to us as to breathe more with his lungs vs the machine and he was panicking. He kept trying to pull out the tube with his hands. We had to tie one down and I was holding the other. one. He wouldn't listen to us telling him to just calm down (imagine that!) and take deep breaths. We ended up putting him back on the sedation last night about 7:15, gave him a pain killer and let him sleep the night away. I haven't called the hospital yet this morning to see how he spent the night, but I imagine he just slept.

At this point, we've decided to keep visitors at a minimum in the room. I can try to sneak away to the family lounge, but no guarantees. If you want to call the ICU for an update, I've given them permission to tell anyone who calls whatever information they can. The cardiologist said that he may need a defibrillator installed in the near future.

I got a little sleep last night. I had been at the hospital for over 24 hours and almost 45 hours without sleep. Just doing the laundry, taking a shower and then back to the hospital. Food and I are not agreeing at this point so I haven't been eating very much. There is beef and chicken broth at the family lounge and the nurse made me have some last night. I did have half a sandwich last night, but not much else. But I haven't been very hungry either. I want to stay with him as much as possible to help calm him. He doesn't know what happened, even though I've told him twice.

I'm printing all your e-mails and taking them to the hospital. If we get him a little bit more awake today, I'll read them to him. But prayers are still needed. Once the breathing tube can be removed, they can remove more of the IV's and possibly move him out of ICU. They're getting full right now, so he better cooperate today."

Debbie.

Debbie wrote this email on Saturday. By then she was running on pure adrenalin, but she was not alone. Her mom, Nancy, was there along with Pastor Beth from our church. In addition, our good friends, Mike and Sandy were there along with two of my best friends in the world, Kevin (K-Bob) and Joel.

I am not sure if there is anything to prepare a person for what she was going through and I am not about to imagine how she was feeling. I would imagine your instincts would kick in and at the time she was worried about one thing only and that was me and I was off in another world.

I continued to get stronger everyday although I was still in the coma. The staff kept trying to wake me up but I wasn't cooperating. When you look at things now, I just wasn't ready to come out of the coma. I have heard they tried to wake me twice prior to it happening. By now my heart had settled down for the most part and was beating normal. They tell me that on occasion, my heart would start to race over 100 BPM and when that happened Debbie tells me she would walk into the room and sit

beside me, hold my hand and tell me everything is okay, and my heart rate would drop back to normal.

Saturday and Sunday, they tell me were visitor days for me. Debbie tells me I had some friends and co-workers stop by to see me. Joel and his youngest daughter, Erin, stopped by to see me. Joel had been stopping by every morning to make sure Debbie was okay and to see what she needed and to hound her about eating something once in a while. Erin asked if I could hear what was going on and Debbie told her that I had been partially awake and it was perfectly fine if Erin wanted to sit in the room and tell me what was going on in the outside world. Also, Tom and Rick, two of my co-workers stopped by. One of my bosses at my office, Tony, also would stop by with treats for my care givers. Now Tony knows me really well and knows that I can be mildly annoying so I think he wanted to make it up to the staff when I would finally wake up. It was also this week that he conveyed to Debbie that my job was waiting for me when I was ready to come back.

And speaking of the outside world, by this time word had gotten out via social media and through two organizations that we belong to that I was in the hospital. Now Debbie doesn't do Facebook or any of the other social medias but friends of mine had posted on my Facebook page so people were starting to find out. Now I am not saying I am this famous person and that I had millions of people clamoring to hear the latest but it did give us a way to let people know what was happening.

I have always known that the power or prayer is a wonderful thing. I try to pray every morning and every night. But now it was me who was getting prayed for. I got emails and cards from people telling me they were lifting me up to God in their prayers. At one point because of people that I know, I had people praying for me in Argentina as well as Europe and across the USA and Canada, and it just wasn't Christians, it was Jewish and Muslim also.

By the end of my first week although I was in the coma I was doing okay. Debbie tells me she was real worried the first 24 hours because that's when the chances of me not making it were the greatest. I was slowly starting to recover and she was not so worried about me dying. She figured I would wake up when I (or God) was ready. As a side note, for the one week I spent in the coma, I only have one memory. On Sunday September 9, 2012, a couple of my co-workers stopped by to see me and I have this memory of waking up and looking at Tom for a brief second, and then back into the coma. For a couple of more days anyway.

Chapter 4

Email

From Debbie

To: Dee, Ken, Joel, 13 more

Subject: Update on Brian

Date: September 12, 2012

Hello Everyone

He's alive!! Prayers have been answered!

"Brian's ventilator tube was removed about 11:45 am (on Tuesday September 11) and after about a one hour adjustment period he started talking and didn't stop all day. He was cracking jokes (like

when I told him the pressure on his arm was his blood pressure being taken he said that if it hit 200 I should sell) and getting very restless. He has been moving around in bed and told me he was bored. My mother was visiting just after the tube was pulled and he remembered that she was getting some work done on her house and he asked about the progress of the work so his memory is starting to come back too. He still doesn't remember last Wednesday but that may be for the best.

He was still a little bit groggy from the sedatives but he is breathing on his own. They tried to put an oxygen mask on him but it didn't fit right and he kept pulling it off to talk. The nurse then changed that out for a nose piece to keep the oxygen flowing into his body. Unfortunately, he kept pulling that off too. I need to bring in a few things for him including his watch and his favorite baseball hat. About noon today (September 12), they will do a swallow test. I think if he can pass that, his IV's can be removed and he can start eating real food. The next step is to move him to a regular room.

The doctors are still debating about a pacemaker or defibrillator for him but he will get one of the other sometime soon but he won't have to go on the ventilator for that. They just use local anesthetic.

And he says he doesn't need to smoke anymore so he asked me to throw away all his stuff.

Again, we cannot say thanks enough for all the prayers and well wishes. I have saved them all for him to read.”

Debbie

On September 11, 2012, I woke up, looked around and the thought that came to me was “Hey Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore”. I knew two things. One, I was not at home and two, I was in a hospital. I saw Debbie and some members of the care team. Debbie told me that on Wednesday September 5, 2012 I had suffered a cardiac arrest at home.

It was at that point that a lot of the fears about whether I had any brain damage got answered. Like a car idling in neutral that suddenly gets put into gear, my brain started to spin (I think the hamster that runs on the wheel had woken up) and it was time to get going. One right after another I started asking questions:

Q: “What hospital am I in?” A: “You are at Fairview Southdale in the ICU”

Q: “If I had my cardiac arrest on September 5, what day is today?” A: “It's now Tuesday September 11”

Q: “What about Tac's dance?” (Tac Ozaki is a square dance caller from Japan and he was calling a dance in our area on September 7. A: “They had 8-10 squares and everyone enjoyed it”

Q: “What about the TV Show?” (Debbie and I were on staff of a show called Friendship Set to Music)
A: “Taping went well Roger called

Q: “What about Jolly Promenaders? I am supposed to start teaching for them on September 16th.”

A: “Bob is going to start teaching and when you are stronger they will welcome you back”

Now I have no doubt that I talked all day. After all I had been in the induced coma for a week and to my knowledge I had never been quite for that long before in my life. At one point, I looked at Debbie and said “I don't smoke, anymore do I? And she answered by saying “the last time you smoked was last Wednesday.” I said okay and went back to whatever I was doing. A little while later I looked at

her and asked the same exact question “I don't smoke, anymore do I?” Debbie answered again the same way and it was then I looked at her and said “you know, I don't think I need to smoke anymore” It was at that point I was officially a non-smoker which considering I started when I was about 15 amounted to just shy of 40 years of smoking. I figure I had it easy with the withdrawal since I was in the coma. I have not smoked since and while some days I am tempted, I made a promise to Debbie and to the doctors.

At one point, I looked Debbie square in the eye and said “I am starting to feel better, can I go home now” and with that statement, laughter erupted around the room. Now I was serious, home is where I am safe and things make sense and I figured if I was home then I would be okay. Never mind the fact I was still hooked up to IV's and at that point I was still going to the bathroom via remote control. Someone, it may have been Debbie, asked me if I knew what had happened to me. I said sure, you told me I had a cardiac arrest but that's past now and I just want to go home. As a matter of fact, what was going through my mind was “If we get out of here now, I can go back to work tomorrow”

Let's back up a little, the above statement is how I live my life, once something is done I want to move on I am not sure if it has anything to do with my ADD but to me I was saying what I felt. I recall seeing a fair number of doctors, I think I had a doctor stopping by every 10 minutes or so and I think I was getting tired of them. I kept taking the oxygen mask off to talk, which that and the fact I don't like being asked questions repeatedly led them to make notes I was agitated. On the plus side these same doctors said my attitude was just fine when I left the hospital a week later.

Beth stopped by to see me and I think I made some comment about “I'll bet you were thinking you really had to officiate at my funeral”, she laughed. Beth is Beth Warpmaecker, she was one of the pastors at my church. I had gotten to know her when she and I went with eight other people to Argentina for a mission trip. It was on the way back home that she and I were sitting next to each other on the plane home and I asked her, “If something should happen to me would you officiate at my funeral but you have to promise to be nice to me in the eulogy.” She laughed and said “I will but only because you will be dead and not talking non-stop”.

Beth and I talked a little bit about what happened. I think at one point I asked her flat out, “can you please tell me what I am doing here because from what I understand I shouldn't be alive.” Beth looked at me and just said “it wasn't your time”. A little later I told her “Hey Beth, I do not recall seeing any bright lights but it was sort of warm where I was. Do you think I have anything to worry about?” She laughed and said it's nice to have the old Brian back. I'll see you later.

I remember waking up at some point and I saw a man sitting next to my bed, I figured out he must be a doctor because he was wearing a stethoscope. He shakes my hand and says, hello I'm your heart doctor, Robert Ketroser, but you can call me Dr. Bob if you want. Dr. Bob and I talked for a while and at the time the biggest question I had was “How did this happen?”, Dr. Bob told me they were not sure what caused my cardiac arrest but they were working on it. Some good news was that I did not have any damage to my heart. It was weak but he assured me that I should be okay. He told they were thinking about implanting a pacemaker and defibrillator so that nothing like this would ever happen again. And he told me they were going to move me from ICU to the heart ward. He told me he would see me later.

On Wednesday September 12, 2012 I was moved from the ICU to the heart ward at Fairview Southdale Hospital and on the road to recovery.

Chapter 5

On Wednesday September 12, 2012, I started on the road to recovery. Sometime in the morning they came up to the ICU and got me ready to transfer to the heart ward. The heart ward at Fairview Southdale is on the 2nd floor and my new home for a while was room 250.

They got me settled in and by this time Debbie had brought me my phone and my laptop computer so I could communicate with the outside world now. She also brought me some sweats so I had something to wear other than the hospital gowns. I think in some ways I was still trying to wrap my mind around what had happened. I know what I had been told but for some reason it was a little surreal. I had heard about people who died and came back but me? I had no memory of seeing bright lights or meeting dead relatives, are you sure I died?

After lunch, two of the staff came in and asked me if I wanted to go for a walk? Do I! I had been horizontal for a week, of course I wanted to go for a walk! Not so fast Brian, you have not been active for 8 days, here's how we're going to do this. We have a walker for you, hang on to it. Also, we will be next to you and we will have the wheel chair just in case you need it. So off we went, me, Debbie and my entourage. It was great to walk again but man was I tired when we got back to the room.

It was when we were back in the room I said I had some questions and as it was, one of my doctors was close by so they said sure.

My first question was "Why does my chest feel like a herd of elephants trampled on it?". You had a few people doing CPR on you not to mention a machine called the Lucas Machine which does 100 chest compressions per minute. Your chest will be sore for a little while, you were lucky because a lot of times ribs get broken not just bruised. My second question was "what are these black and blue marks on my wrists?" We tried remove your breathing tube twice before we could remove it and wake you up. You would wake up and try to pull the tube out. We had to strap your arms down so you would not hurt yourself. My third question was "What's this rash on my right arm?" With that they figured out I was having an allergic reaction to the antibiotics I was being given for my pneumonia. No problem, we were about to take you off it so it should clear up in a few days.

I was starting to get a handle on things a little bit. Now for the first time in over a week I had to use the bathroom, no problem, get out of bed, wheel my IV's with me and away we go. Not so fast Brian, I swung my legs off the bed and the alarm went off. Into the room one of my aides came in with the question, "Going somewhere?" "Well" I said, "I am going to the bathroom." "Not alone you aren't" she said, "you are not allowed out of bed without help". "We have a bed pan for you" she said, "I don't think so" I replied. "Let's not have trouble okay Brian I will help you but I need to do something first but I will be back in a couple of minutes". Fair enough. I really tried not to be a problem patient but then again, I was really trying to not have to use the bed pan.

I had also noticed on my walks around the heart ward that the birth center was on the same floor. Since I had time on my hands, I offered to go to over there and offer my services as a baby name consultant. They did not take me up on my offer.

Since I had the rash from the antibiotics they could not schedule my surgery to install my pacemaker and defibrillator until that cleared up but I had enough to keep me busy. On Saturday September 15,

my door was closed and Debbie had gone home for the day so I decided to see if I could remember to call a square dance. I had some music so I picked out Amarillo by Morning and started to sing. Not too loud but loud enough so that a couple of the staff people poked their heads in to make sure I was alright. I was more than alright, I could remember the words and the dance cues so I took another step forward.

On Monday September 17, 2012, I went into surgery to install my pacemaker and defibrillator. For the second time in two weeks I went in for an MRI and then the surgery in the afternoon. I also found out that on Tuesday September 18, 2012 I would be moving to a rehab facility to continue my recovery.

Thanks, be to God.

Chapter 6

Tuesday September 18 was moving day for me. The surgery had gone just fine and I was ready to move to rehab. I just had to wait for a final meeting with the doctors and my paperwork.

I had my lunch at the hospital and then they brought the wheel chair for me. I asked if I could walk out. My reason for this was I figured it would be a moral victory if I could walk out of the same place where I had come into in an ambulance and knocking on death's doorstep. Brian, they said, we can't do that. Our policy is that everyone gets to ride in a wheel chair when they leave. I didn't argue, I had been in the hospital for 14 days and while that's not a lot of time for some people for me it seemed like a lifetime.

Debbie got the car and off we went to the rehab facility. It felt good to be outside and I had the thought that maybe I can open the window and stick my head out to get all this fresh air. But I didn't, we were going 60 miles per hour down Interstate 35W and I did not want any trouble.

Debbie and I pulled up to Fairview Rehab building and I got out and waited for Debbie to park the car. Up we went to the seventh floor and got checked in. We met with the staff and they told us what I could expect. Now one of the staff asked me if it was true that I was a square dance caller and I said yep I was and that was one of my fears was that I would not be able to call anymore. They told me not to worry and they would see if we could work on it. Debbie kissed me goodbye and told me she would see me on Wednesday night, she was going back to her office.

Now I must confess that I did not think I had forgotten how to do anything but I also knew that there was the question of how long I had been without oxygen so I am going to give this my best shot.

Now if you have never been to this type of rehab, allow me to explain a little. It was like a job in some respects, I was expected to be dressed every day, I ate my meals in the dining room and I would have three to four hours of therapy every day.

The first thing I did was teach 7 other people how to square dance (yay! I remember), followed by physical and occupational therapy. I had sessions in the morning and afternoon every day. Day by day I was getting stronger and I was feeling better. Debbie would stop by after work and we would have dinner together. I also had a few friends and co-workers stop by to see me.

The week passed quickly and before I knew it they were telling me it was time to go home.

On Monday September 23, 2012, Debbie and I met with the staff and talked about the progress I had made in the past week. I said goodbye to the staff and it was time to leave. On the way home Debbie

and I stopped by our church to say hello and I wanted to let them know they could take me off the “needs a visit list” and to thank them for all the prayers. After church, we stopped by to get some lunch and then home. Home where I would be safe and things would make sense for me. Just shy of three weeks since I left the house in an ambulance I walked through the door. Life is good!

Chapter 7

On Tuesday September 25, 2012, I woke up, and this time I was back in my bed and life was great!

I had not figured out when I was going back to work. My company had left it up to me as to when I would come back but in the meantime, there was stuff to get done. I had some doctors to see this week and the first was to see Dr. Smith, my primary care doctor.

Dr. Christofer Smith became my primary care physician in February of 2012. And like most doctors he wanted me to lose about 20 pounds and stop smoking.

When Dr. Smith came into the room on that Tuesday afternoon I looked at him and said: “Well you wanted me to lose 20 pounds and quit smoking so I did”. He told me I did not have to go to such extremes in the future. We had a good visit and he told me he wanted to see me again about a month

I spent the first few days at home seeing a couple of other doctors and going to the gym for cardiac rehab, I was going to be going twice a week for the next 12 weeks.

I had been home a few days and by then Debbie had gone back to work. On Friday of my first week I was not having a good day and I had this over whelming urge for a cigarette. Now I knew there was nothing at the house, and the closest store is about 4 blocks away. I was not allowed to drive at this point but I figured I could walk to the store, except I started to over think this. Let's say I do walk to the store and buy some. Then I suppose I should wait to get home to light one up, but wait what if I light up and have another cardiac arrest, no one will be here to preform CPR on me. Oh well, I don't smoke anymore anyway. I never did go to the store.

The rest of the story.....

On Monday October 1, 2012, I walked into my office for my first day back. It was great to see all my co-workers again and they had even decorated my desk with signs that said “Welcome Back Brian”

In November of 2012 I was back on stage calling my first square dance.

Also in November of 2012 I stopped by both the ICU and the heart ward to thank the staff for my care.

In June of 2013 Debbie and I got to meet the police officers, the paramedics and the 911 dispatcher who responded to the call.

Life is good, thanks be to God!