



EB Attaway

2014 BLF Recipient



We had just had wonderful Christmas holidays and we were due back to work January 4, 2014. We decided to have lunch with our daughter that Saturday before we were due back to work on the 6th. Shortly after lunch, EB complained of an extremely sore throat so we headed back home. His throat got worse and his body began to ache. "The dreaded man-cold has hit our house" was my Facebook status. EB crawled into bed. His fever raged to 102 and his breathing was labored. I slept on the floor by the bed because I didn't want to catch what he had, and something told me this was worse than a cold. I set my iPhone to wake me every 2 hours. Despite Tylenol, the fever didn't break. At dawn, EB was too weak to sit up. I dialed 911. A terse response from the operator led me to take him myself by car. We drove to Methodist Katy. Too sick to walk in, they got a wheelchair to transport him. Too sick to sit in the waiting room, they laid him on a gurney.

Nine hours later they told me to take him home. His flu and strep swabs were negative; so was his chest x-ray. They gave me Tamiflu, an antibiotic, a two day pass from work and a wheelchair ride back to the car.

For the next 2 1/2 days he lay in bed, unable to eat or get up. He drank occasional sips of water from a bottle he held under his right arm. His fever raged; he took his meds, and his breathing was labored. Even lightly touching his skin was excruciatingly painful for him. On the morning of the 8th he told me, "Linda, you need to figure this out...I'm dying." I dialed 911.

That call set in motion the next nine months of our lives. We were transported back to Methodist Katy, where some very smart people tried for 10 days to figure out what had a hold of my husband. He was in ICU on life support, in a coma, in and out of Afib, unstable BP, and they were losing him. He was in full sepsis and they didn't know why. His fever spiked over 107. The antibiotic I gave him from the first ER trip masked whatever infection he had, and the doctors had no answers. As a Hail Mary, they told me they would try massive amounts of steroids to bring him back. It worked. He woke up, he came off the ventilator and dialysis and started to do some in the bed physical therapy. He was transferred from ICU to the floor. Twelve hours later, his BP crashed and he was sent back to ICU. This time a doctor felt his right knee and said it felt warm. They stuck a big needle in his knee and pulled out a syringe of what looked like chocolate milk. They had found the source; an old knee replacement has become infected. The knee had to come out. I said, "Not here; he's going downtown to the medical center."

It took 36 hours to get him transferred to Methodist downtown...more H1N1 made it difficult to get a bed there, too. On January 20th, the surgeon who had performed the original replacement nearly 12 years before, came in and took out the knee. Shortly after surgery, EB coded; a metabolically induced cardiac arrest. He was out 20 minutes during which time most his major organs were compromised; he was back on the ventilator, on 24-hour dialysis and no one expected him to live. He suffered a stroke on the right side of his brain and micro-bleeds across his brain, pulmonary embolism, they drained his lungs



twice. He developed blood clots in all extremities so an IVC filter was implanted to catch further clots from hitting his lungs or brain. For the next four weeks he was delirious and extremely fragile. Time and time again, I called the family and said, "This is it; it's time for you to come." He went septic a second time from an infected PICC line with a Serratia infection. He developed blood-borne yeast infection. He contracted MRSA and eventually developed CMV infection in his GI tract.

On February 20, a doctor advised me to let him pass; to withhold food and water and let him go. He advised, based on over 30 years of dealing with septic patients, that EB would never wake and if he did he would never be cognitive. I ignored his advice and hired another attending. Three days later, on February 23, EB woke up. He spent the next 7 months fighting against the odds to get back to his life. When he woke, he couldn't move the left side of his body. Look at him today!