



HOWARD KINDRED SR.

Living on The Edge

By Howard Kindred Sr.

My eyes opened, I saw my mom standing at the foot of the bed. She had tears in her eyes starring at me? Asked her what's wrong? I said is it time to go to work? She told me I had an accident and had been in a coma for 5 days! I was told when I left work from my 12-8 shift, my corvette hit a patch of ice, sided swapped a wall ran over a boulder that propelled me into a tree. Then I was pulled from the car by one of New York's Finest who was also working midnight to eight. I do believe in miracles since we both left our shifts early 0700hr. If not for this brave man I wouldn't be writing my story. After pulling me out of the vette it exploded! Emergency personnel at the scene had put a sheet over my body lying on the side of the road. When my partner saw my car he stopped ran over to the scene and was told "He's dead" my partner pulled down the sheet and smacked me! I made a noise; my partner yelled he is alive! The on duty police then took me in their squad car to the hospital. I had a skull fracture and received 350 stitches in face and head. The skull fracture was one layer away from the brain that could have left me a vegetable. At 20 years old this was the beginning (**2nd. chance at life**) of a wild (*Living on The Edge*) life that I had no idea what I was in for; I was released after 9 days in the hospital.

Fast forward 23 years, I received results of my blood test and was informed I had hepatitis c virus (HCV). Which I contracted from the blood transfusion I had with my corvette. I tried HCV therapy, but it failed me! After my liver biopsy showed hepatitis c cirrhosis stage 4. I was put on the organ donor transplant waiting list, waited 22 months for the phone call that the University of Pittsburgh medical Center (UPMC) had an organ donor. After being called 8 times for the liver transplant and put on stand-by, the 8th. time was a charm, got the call and UPMC said we got a donor for you get down here in two hours! Driving there takes 5 hours, the only way to make it was to fly! I called AirLifeLine (now called Angel Flight) I had been listed with them for the past 20 months waiting for the day in case I needed them to fly me. They have pilots that volunteer their plane, fuel and their time to fly patients in need of medical care. They fly into your local airport and transport you to the hospital's airport. I got to the hospital in 2 hours, they prep me, rolled me into the operating room. My eyes opened I was in the ICU unit, alive and well, thinking this is my **3rd. chance at life!**

On my 11th. year liver transplant anniversary, I found myself back at UPMC at 0200hrs. eleven years to the day and hour when I had my transplant. I had a bile duct blockage, they did a procedure called ERCP in which they go down through your mouth and put stents in the bile ducts to keep them open. I made a return visit two months later to have the bile duct stents checked. During the ERCP procedure the doctors found that I had developed a severe infection of the bile ducts. Some how since I was at UPMC last I developed a Hepatic artery thrombosis which blocked all the blood to my bile ducts of the liver. Was told I had to be placed back on the organ donor transplant waiting list for another liver.



After waiting sixteen months in and out of the hospital due to infections of the liver and bile ducts, which I could have brought the farm or at the very least been taken off the waiting list. I received a call from UPMC they wanted me to come to clinic, wanted to check my bile ducts again for blockage. But! It was Easter weekend; I had no way of getting down there! The following week they called again I was told the get to clinic ASAP. This time a friend of mine Dr. Dan Duprey MD. drove me to UPMC. I remember Dan telling me the day I was admitted, *"Don't worry GOD has reason for all this"*.

After another ERCP procedure was performed this time putting in three stents in the bile ducts, I was told that there was no more they could do for me. I awoke, after fasting the night before it now has been sixteen hours since I ate last. They were this tray of food staring right at me! Saying eat me, as I had the food up to my mouth! Dr. Devera walks in and said stop! Don't eat we have a donor liver or you. I will be performing the transplant, I am going to get some sleep, see ya in 12 hours. I could not believe what I was just told, I called my wife and son told them the news! They all thought I was playing a rude joke on them, being it was April 1st. April Fools Day.

I knew this time around the transplant operation was more difficult due to all the scar tissue from the first transplant, also the grafting of the hepatic artery.

My eyes opened I found myself in the ICU unit! After a few minutes I realized I was alive and made it through a **4th.time at a chance at life**. I keep remembering what Dr. Dan said *"Don't worry GOD has reason for all this"*. how lucky can one person be? Realizing 19 people a day die on the transplant waiting list. Only by the grace of GOD walk I. One thing I have learned is to have faith, if it is GOD's will it will happen. A month before my first liver transplant I founded Northeastern Pennsylvania Transplant Support Group Inc. (NEPATSG) in 1995. We became incorporated as a 501 c 3 non profit in 1998 the same year we started our Hepatitis Division, to help support and educate the public about HCV. In 2001 we started the Eastern Pennsylvania Hepatitis C Coalition (EPAHCC). To help guide other HCV support groups in Pennsylvania and advocate for all those infected with HCV.

Life's been living on the edge for me since I was 20 years old, after reflection GOD has a purpose for all of us, only that we must be willing to listen! My life would not have been possible without the unselfish act of organ donation. The organ donor's family decision to honor their loved one's request to be an organ donor, I would not be a devoted husband, father and founder of an organization that has made a difference in so many families, that we have been able to help! *"Living on The Edge-What a Wonderful Life"*.