

The Promise of a Rainbow

On Thursday morning, August 3, 1995 just prior to leaving for work, I went out to check our swimming pool for dead animals and such. When I turned around to head back into the house, I noticed a rare sight—a full rainbow in the Western sky.

I hurried back into the house to awaken Cheryl to witness this spectacular sight. However, in my haste, I slipped on our deck and did a very impressive "Chevy Chase" fall in which I felt my ankle pop. I mustered all my energy to get myself up and back into the house where I scared Cheryl awake with the news that I thought I broke my ankle. Gasping in pain, I insisted that she go look at the rainbow before I would accept her help.

In the mean time, I became very light headed and nauseated. Cheryl pushed a chair under me, got me a stomach mint and a vomit receptacle. The mint worked but my ankle was numb. I had breakfast but during that time my ankle swelled and became painful—I insisted on keeping my shoe on. I reluctantly agreed to go have my ankle x-rayed. I called our family physician but she was on vacation. I was referred to another physician (Dr. Purvis) who was covering for her.

Cheryl drove me to his office about 20 miles away and helped me hobble in for treatment. They were very considerate and the x-ray films showed no serious damage, possibly strained but not sprained or broken. During the hobble back to a treatment room, I had chest pains and broke out in intense (dripping) sweat. Rather than wrap my ankle and prescribe crutches, the physician ordered an EKG! The next thing I new he dropped something under my tongue which burned and made my head throb—nitro! After three nitro-pills and four EKGs, he advised me that he had called an ambulance to take me to the cardiac care unit (CCU) at All Saints hospital in Fort Worth.

I spent two days in the CCU on a heart monitor with blood thinners fed through an IV. On Saturday, I underwent an Angiogram. I was given good news and bad news. The good news was my condition was treatable. The bad news, my time was short (possibly days), my congenital heart murmur was critical, and I had 95% blockage to the main part of my heart. The prognosis was heart failure and strokes—usually fatal under these circumstances. I agreed to an aortic valve replacement to fix the murmur and bypass surgery that took place on Tuesday, August 8. The surgery was successful and I was released to go home on Sunday evening, August 13. Though my strained ankle was still tender, its pain paled in comparison to what I felt in the incisions in my chest and other leg (where they took the vein for the bypasses).

My artificial aortic valve ticks to remind me of the precious gift of time I have been given. I got stronger every day. I was released to work light duty for half days beginning September 5 and full time without restrictions on October 8.

I have accepted the promise of the rainbow. I have a new life to live and a new hope for the future. I thank God for the gift of new life.
