

## Faith Story by Tom Jubar

My faith journey needs to begin with a little history. I grew up in a small city in upstate New York. A little smaller than Canon City. I was raised Catholic as that was the religion my mother followed. I made my first communion and confirmation and went to classes during high school (sometimes) but that's another story. In college I met my beautiful wife. After graduation we got married and started our life together.

I had always been taught to help others and to volunteer when the opportunity arose. I joined the local rescue squad and a year later it merged with the local volunteer fire department. My low self esteem told me I needed to succeed, so as soon as I was eligible I ran for office and was elected Lieutenant of the rescue part of the department. I was in charge of all the training, and maintaining the ambulance and rescue truck. At the same time I was teaching first aid, taking EMT classes, working two jobs and trying to spend time with my family.

On April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1976, I was on an ambulance call and after responding to the scene I had a heart attack, 35 yrs. old, two small children and I was having a heart attack. That was Sunday night, Monday morning I had another and on Tuesday I flat lined. It was at that time that our faith was really tested. During the flat line, I saw a figure that told me it wasn't my time; I needed to go back as I still had things to do. The Dr. told Gail I wouldn't live thru the day. I guess the Dr. was wrong, I still had things to do. Must be, I'm here today. It was at this time that I discovered who my real friends were and who my so called friends

were. My so called friends were the ones that wanted something and my real friends were there to help in any way they could. During the next few years, I was in and out of the hospital as they tried to regulate my medication. During that time we joined the Lutheran Church (Third Lutheran, as it was the third Lutheran church in the area). In 1980 I went to a cardiologist, had a battery of tests and he told me that I had maybe 3 yrs. to live. The pastor at our church became my counselor and helped me thru some tough times. With a 3 yr. time limit, I wondered if every little pain was the end. Again, my fate was in God's hands and I had to have faith that whatever happened it would be what God wanted. Finally, after a trip to NY City another cardiologist told me the first one was crazy to even imply that I only had 3 yrs. left. Both Gail and I had done a lot of praying and left the future in God's hands. Things settled down after that and there were no problems for several years. God had answered our prayers.

In the early 90's I started to have problems again and it was decided that I needed a quadruple bypass. During this procedure I had a simultaneous edarterectomy of the right carotid artery. Ironically, I was excited as we had always been told that the heart problem was inoperable. That was in 1993 and all went well. At the same time I was having circulation problems with my legs and in 1996 they did an aorta/bifem procedure. That is where they put a graft around the aorta and femoral arteries. That helped for a while, but the legs have gotten progressively worse.

During all of the problems and surgeries we prayed and decided that God had a plan for me. We didn't know what it was, but had faith that God would take care of us.

Our two girls grew up with the constant threat that Dad might not be there tomorrow, but with their faith they grew up to be beautiful women, married outstanding young men and both have two wonderful children. This trauma affected my oldest grandson the most, as he lived with us for a while, and remembers having to be careful around grandpa post surgery. Throughout all the trials and tribulations, my whole family as well as my church family have been very supportive and have trusted in God that I would still be here.

In 2010 I was diagnosed with cancer of the kidney. By 2011 it had spread to the lymph system and another tumor had developed. In July 2011 I had surgery and they removed a kidney and the tumor.

While I was in the hospital and they weren't sure I was going survive, both Gail and our daughter were on an emotional roller coaster. As I recovered and was released from the hospital, ahead was the long ride home from Denver. Both Gail and Kim were still on the emotional roller coaster. I know God sends signs in many ways; often we ignore them or don't understand their meaning. Last summer our family received a sign that could either be ignored or misunderstood. As we were leaving Denver the most beautiful rainbow we had ever seen appeared. As that one faded another appeared, this continued all the way to Florence, Kim with great joy said, "Everything is going to be okay." Both Gail and Kim agreed it was Gods way of telling us. We have continued to believe that every day since.

Again, faith and prayer and God's will saw me through. You have seen my name on the prayer list since then. They thought the surgery was successful, but a short 3 months later a PET scan showed that another tumor had shown up on another lymph node. After two different

rounds of chemo, the tumor is still there and has not shrunk one little bit. After a recent trip to Denver, the only thing left to do is see if it can be slowed down and controlled.

I did not tell you all of this for sympathy, or to have people feel sorry for me, but to tell you that we all have a higher power looking over us. Arguing with God, trying to make deals or any other things you may try to do with God doesn't work. Remember, he is the one that is carrying us. We will probably never know what his plan is for us, but that is where our faith comes into play. If you don't have faith that God will guide and protect you, your anguish in life will multiple exponentially. God never closes one door without opening another, it is important to trust and go through that door.

I have had some life changing decisions to make. I could mope around, complain, and generally make life miserable for everybody. Or I could smile, enjoy the life I have been given. I chose the later.

I have no idea what God has in mind for me in the future. I do know that I have had a wonderful life, a loving family, fantastic children that are happily married, four marvelous grandchildren and wonderful friends here at SOTH. Whatever God has planned for me I will find out as it happens. I have faith that God will protect my family and friends no matter what his plan for me. I read a sign at a church on 115 recently that to me sums it all up. "If God brings you to it, he will help you through it."