

## TO UPDATE MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS BY JOHN (JACK) RICHARDS

PREPARED IN JANUARY, 2021



In November 2, 2019, my wife, Charlotte, retired from the Postal Service. In anticipation of that landmark, I scheduled a surprise retirement party for Charlotte and many friends and family at our favorite restaurant on November 9. In the lead up to the party, I began to feel strange pains in my left leg. On November 11 the pain increased, so I went to Presbyterian Hospital ER, and was diagnosed as having sciatica problems. I was sent home with a script.

I saw my PCP as a follow up on November 21. They increased the meds I had been prescribed by Presbyterian Hospital. I was seen again by the PCP on December 2. I was instructed to continue the meds.

Our Union Retiree Chapter Holiday Party was scheduled for December 5. That party is a sit down luncheon at The Chadwick in Wexford for @ 120 members and guests. It is an elaborate affair for which I handle the logistics and preside over.

The leg pain drastically increased without relief. Therefore, on the date of the party, I leaned on Charlotte to complete the last minute party arrangements while I summoned and was transported by ambulance to Presbyterian Hospital ER. After Charlotte got the party rolling, she left the party and found me in the ER. I was diagnosed as having gout, and was sent home with a script, and urged to see my PCP in a few days.

I went to my PCP on December 10. I had deteriorated badly by then. The leg was very swollen and red, and the ankle developed an abscess. The PCP took one look at the leg, then summoned an ambulance to transport me to Washington Hospital. That began my odyssey through the inpatient medical establishment.

The hospital began to treat me symptomatically. They did a biopsy on the ankle on December 13, and operated on it on December 15. By December 18 I began having breathing problems. I was put on heavy duty respirators. I struggled with the breathing. (I am convinced the virus was somehow involved.) Twice Charlotte was told nothing more could be done for me, to find a hospice for terminal care. On December 20 they were going to intubate me. But I rallied at the last second, and ultimately improved enough that I was transferred to the McKeesport Specialty Hospital on January 6. I continued at McKeesport until January 28, when I was transferred to Premier Washington Health Care. I continued there until February 11, when I was sent home with follow up visiting nurses and therapy.

But apparently all was not completely well. In a few days I was bothered with infections that were not adequately treated. On February 18 I went by ambulance to Presbyterian Hospital due to pain caused by the infections. They transferred me to Montefiore Hospital. At Montefiore I was under the care of an excellent infectious group who diagnosed the problems and, after several days of treatment, discharged me with a regimen of several scripts and visiting nurses and therapists. The in-home services initiated then later ended on June 8.

During all the hospital and therapy facilities, Charlotte visited every day, which was a real life saver for me. She was more a bedside nurse than a visiting spouse. I doubt that I could have gone through that ordeal without her. Her hands on support continues day by day.

The final outcome is that I am in a diminished condition. I am always short of breath. I can only walk for a short distance because of this. I am able to drive but use a cane to get in and out of the car. My right leg and shoulder are in a weakened state. The top of my tongue is numb, causing diminished and weird tasting of food. I am, however, able to continue activities with the Union Retiree Chapter. *NO RESPONSE EXPECTED.*