

Marty Postlethwait and family, a care partner perspective on PF

To Our Dad with love-

Our family's journey with Pulmonary Fibrosis began in 2017, when my Dad was sitting in the kitchen one summer evening talking to my Mom and passed out. Rushed to the hospital by ambulance, little did we know from that day on, "our" lives would be forever changed like many other families faced with a challenging diagnosis. I say "our" lives as we were in this together as a family and supporting my Dad. Seeking the best hospital, physician, medical treatments, and support services don't come without enduring heartache and hope, laughter and tears, and true determination to learn everything about something our family had never heard about – *Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis (IPF)*.

My Dad is a smart hardworking man who has been very committed to his family his entire life. As his daughter, my image of him even today as he gives the fight of his life, is still the same. He's tall, burley, smart, handsome, and a man of many trades. He's always had to have the last word which has been a joke in our family for many years. Thinking back, I honestly feel like we knew two years before his diagnosis that something wasn't quite right. He had developed a nagging cough and was more winded when doing physical labor. He never complained other than a tickle in his throat and we never pushed for more answers. A few things always come with age, right? He went to see his regular physician every three months so we never gave it a second thought that he would have a life threatening illness. Why would we?

It took five months for us to get his diagnosis and thank goodness we were presented with options. We were in the beginning stages of his treatment plan but my Dad had been through so much in just a short period of time. Almost five months of being in the hospital, surgeries, therapy, numerous needle sticks each day, and the list goes on. After we had met with his current doctors who had been caring for him, we knew that he was not in the best place for his diagnosis. We as a family were now going to tell my Dad that his best options were to transfer to another hospital where he could receive care from a doctor and his wonderful care team who specialized in Pulmonary Fibrosis. This meant starting all over with a new plan. Thank goodness my Dad listened to us with an open mind and ready to conquer IPF and give it everything he had to find a new normal to live his life. Jumping into action and making a few phone calls, we had him transferred across town to another ICU. We were so grateful to be heading to a hospital that supported patients and their families who deal with IPF and were dedicated to only the best care and treatments.

Given two options of medicine that were used for patients diagnosed with IPF, we chose the lesser of "better" side effects to start with his treatment. Within a couple of months

my Dad started a new drug that was approved by the FDA that showed positive results in slowing down the progression of Pulmonary Fibrosis. It took him awhile to adjust to a new routine and dosage of his medicine but, he has always been a loyal patient and has had a positive attitude.

Dealing with a disease that has no cure is hard in so many ways and affects family members that are both young and old. With my Dad being not only a grandfather, he is blessed with five great-granddaughters who know him as Papa. What I love about him the most is he's always upbeat around them and rarely is the conversation about him or how he is feeling. He takes the time to focus on them and their activities even if his day is not great. I guess what I'm saying is my Dad only shows that life is good (and even to his care team) and rarely complains about his situation. As he would say, "It won't change anything", which is so true.

Many life changes definitely do put things in perspective and IPF is no exception. Last year for my Dads 80th Birthday, he had the opportunity to give himself a present, which was a 2000 Corvette. He asked my mom her thoughts and she told him to "go for it! If that's what you want then do it!" He didn't dare ask her twice and was able to check off something that was on his bucket list. My Dad had always enjoyed Corvette's in his earlier days and they have always held a special place in his heart. Again, life is about moments and memories and making the best of each day. He didn't quit living because of his diagnosis!

One of the hardest adjustments I feel with this disease is adapting to wearing oxygen and knowing your limits. This is definitely something that he had to learn to adjust to and taking his now new best friend, his oxygen, with him everywhere he goes. My Dad has shared with us as a family, that it makes him feel better knowing each day he has set a personal goal to do something and move around. After learning more about IPF and the toll it takes on a person, I could see how easy it would be to sit around and not put the added stress on your lungs- depleting your reserved oxygen. Having a support system and good attitude makes a huge difference in your treatments and daily living. Each day is a journey and we are so thankful that our Dad is a fighter and determined to enjoy each day to its fullest. To his care team, we appreciate all of you and the support you have given to our family.