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'GOD'S WILL'

Faith helped Defiance couple through ordeal

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After almost a year of fighting desperately for his life as the result of a brain aneurysm, numerous hospital stays and four of the worst infections that can happen to a human, Roger Jones finally went home yesterday.

Earlier this week, from his room at Brookview Healthcare Center in Defiance, Roger, 53, and his wife, Melissa, who are Defiance residents and members of St. Mary's Catholic Church, discussed his long battle to stay alive and then regain his former life.

Melissa said, "Last year was a bad year for our family. Roger's sister, Mary Steyer, died on Jan. 28 after being diagnosed with cancer in 2013. My father had a heart attack on April 4. Then on April 24, Roger had a brain aneurysm that almost took his life."

"When Roger left work at Spangler's on April 24 last year and came home, he had a headache," Melissa said. "He said it was down low in the back of his neck and I told him he should see the doctor. I had planned to go with family members to see my dad, but I decided at the last minute not to go. I was home and it was about 9 p.m. when I heard some weird noises that Roger was making. I went to check on him and saw that he was sweating profusely and that his speech was slurred. I knew right away that he was having a stroke. Within five minutes, I had called 911, his mother, our two children in Toledo and Tipp City and my sister."

"When the ambulance pulled out of our driveway with him, he coded (had a respiratory or cardiac arrest)," she said. "They took him to Mercy (Defiance Hospital) since it was the closest to our home. In the ER, he coded two more times. A nurse at the hospital talked to me and then called for a priest to come. There were two priests and a deacon there within minutes."

"The ER doctor told me that it was not good," she continued. "I

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"Our faith has been so important to us. Here it is Holy Week and Roger is going home. I feel that God is taking care of us. The fact that I was home when his aneurysm burst and was able to get help for him, I think is God's will. If I had left and come back several hours later, Roger would have been gone."

— Melissa Jones, of Defiance

Darlene Prince/C-N Photos

Roger Jones and his wife, Melissa, are shown above at Brookview Healthcare Center in Defiance as he practices walking with a walker and sitting in a chair in his room. Almost a year ago, Jones had an aneurysm that burst, sending him into a long struggle for his life.



At left, Roger Jones, a former resident at Brookview Healthcare Center, is shown with his sister-in-law, Amy Reynolds, at the surprise goodbye party given by Brookview on Thursday. After almost a year in hospitals and health care centers, Jones finally went home on Friday. At right, Jones is shown with the Brookview's director of nursing, Jody Williamson.



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told him to tell me the truth about what had happened to Roger. He said Roger had a massive brain bleed and it was not going to end well. If he did survive, I might wish he hadn't."

Melissa said the Mercy ER staff stabilized him and was going to send him by helicopter to St. V's, but Roger was running out time. Then they learned that a neurological surgery team was already assembled at the University of Toledo Hospital and so he was sent there.

"The neuro team at UT was outstanding," Melissa said. "Dr. (Mouhammad) Jumaa, the neurologist, came and told the family what he was going to do. He said Roger's vein had exploded where the aneurysm was located and he had inserted a coil around the aneurysm to stop the bleeding. He said the bleeding had caused Roger to have a stroke. He told us the next 72 hours would be crucial."

"Then the swelling (in his brain) started to go down and we were feeling good about that," she said. "He was still hooked up to life support. I decided I would keep a journal about what happened. About eight days later, he opened one eye and looked around. My son, Alex, was there for that and texted me as I was on my way to Toledo. The doctor told us they were going to start asking him to open his eyes on command. Two weeks later, Dr. Jumaa said he was blinking his eyes on command. I noticed his eyes were following me as I walked around his room. I told him, 'Roger, if you know who I am, blink twice' and he did."

After four weeks at UT, Roger was sent to Advanced Specialty Hospital, which is located a short distance from UT. He had to be weaned off the ventilator there. Melissa said Roger could talk through his tracheotomy tube and was asking questions about what had happened to him. He fought off a bad urinary infection while he was at the hospital and on June 24 came to a Defiance facility for rehabilitation.

"By July 11, he was back at UTM with four very serious infections — MRSA, C. diff, sepsis and ESB (extended spectrum Beta-Lactamase)," Melissa said. "He was back on life support and three weeks later the doctor told us it didn't look good and we would have to decide about keeping the life support going."

But Roger did begin to improve and by Wednesday he was taken off the ventilator and did well.

Melissa said, "On July 30, a candlelight vigil was set up on Facebook and we were overwhelmed with the response. The power of prayer is amazing."

The neuro team told Melissa they wanted to put a shunt in his head to improve blood flow. On Aug. 20, Roger had the shunt surgery at

UTMC. Dr. Azedine Medkhour told Melissa that he was going to "fix Roger" and after a two-hour surgery, the doctor said it had gone well. He was moved out of ICU and on Sept. 2 was transferred to the CHWC Montpelier Hospital for rehabilitation.

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"We are so thankful for all of the doctors and nurses for his excellent care," she said. "Because of the stroke, one of his legs had contracted and he would need rehabilitation. And he had to start walking again."

Roger came to Brookview Healthcare Center on Dec. 23 for more rehabilitation and finally saw the light at the end of his long tunnel.

"Again," she noted, "we thank everyone at Brookview for the wonderful care."

She then spoke about the amazing support they received from family, friends and Roger's co-workers and his employer, the Spangler Candy Company.

"Spangler's was and is wonderful," Melissa said. "I can't say enough about their support. The new president, Bill Martin, and retired president Dean Spangler came to see him. Someone from the company was there either on a daily basis or calling about him. The human resources worked with his insurance with me. They were very

supportive."

Roger said, "Spangler's told me as long as I am able to come back to work, there will be a job for me. I want to go back to my old job though. I am a maintenance supervisor."

Many friends and family have shown their support for Roger through Facebook Team Roger, where T-shirts with the bright orange color of the Cleveland Browns (Roger's favorite team) had been designed to show their support for Roger.

"Our son, Alex, has stepped up as 'man of the house,'" Melissa said. "He came to Brookview every day. Our daughter, Sara Moss, was very supportive, too. She was married last summer on June 28 and since Roger was in the hospital and could not attend, her wedding was filmed for him to see later. We are planning on a do-over of the wedding ceremony so Roger can walk her down the aisle."

Roger is working on his walking ability and he is making good progress.

He said, "All through this ordeal, I feel as if my sister, Mary, has been sitting on my shoulder, watching over me. I felt her saying, 'Don't give up.' And I want to be able to make this up to my wife, too. Without her I wouldn't even be here. If my story and the fact that I came back can inspire one person, it will make us happy."

Melissa added, "Our faith has been so important to us. Here it is Holy Week and Roger is going home. I feel that God is taking care of us. The fact that I was home when his aneurysm burst and was able to get help for him, I think is God's will. If I had left and come back several hours later, Roger would have been gone."

"The point that we would like to make is without Roger's stubborn determination, family and friends, and with prayer and God's will, Roger would not be here to celebrate Easter at home with his loved ones. Roger says it best, 'Never give up hope.'"