

Laughing through tears  
(Knowing God's got this)

How does one write about life with MTM1 in just a page?

So hard, but here goes nothing.

Come one come all to the greatest show on earth

"Raddatz brothers and Barnum baily circus"

Where death defying acts will thrill you...

Strength and courage with warm you...

And clowns will make you smile.

In 1991 my happy little goofball was born "Cliffy".

In 1995 God decided to add to the "Patrick" to the circus.

I can't write a sad depressing story because I never felt that way.

I'm going to skip to the present and work back to the past.

Patrick is a blue mohawked, bearded, tattooed, pierced, gaged ear 20 year old.

Cliffy is a happy healthy 24 year old Angel running happily with Jesus, causing a ruckus no doubt with Joshy. 😊 His earthly age would have been 24, but his heavenly age is 9. In this circus we call life, Cliff was the magician, his disappearing act rocked our world in 2001, and I'm guessing he wanted to be first before the twin towers. In 2001 I felt something, something was different with little Cliff, although he never spoke, his eyes told a thousand stories. One of our many conversations was about leaving. I told him, "Cliffy, if you wanna go...go, I will be ok, I promise.

A week later the little poop head took my words literally and took his disappearing act all the way to heaven. I was like, “Really Cliffy, Really...a week?, what the heck” But I gave permission so I HAD to be ok with it like I promised. I’m guessing he was thinking, I lived through renal failures, blown lungs, sepsis, aortic tears, broken femurs, seizures and numerous pneumonia’s, so if mom gave me the ok I’m so outta here. So with a POOF he was outta here and life changed.

As with Cliffy I’ve never focused on what Pat couldn’t do, but delighted in what he could do. He has travelled to 29 of the 50 states, (plans on being in Ireland for his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday), has written for a local paper, had girlfriends, jumped ramps with his wheelchair in the middle of a corn field (without me knowing), gone in the ocean with a beach wheelchair, has been to concerts that I didn’t attend and come back altered from shots of Jameson. Collects stout beer bottles that he has of course emptied INTO HIS MOUTH, has enjoyed bachelor parties WAY TO MUCH, done red carpets for premiers, made friends with amazing people, met sport stars and to this day maintains close friendships. We’ve out run an actual tornado in Minnesota, drove through Katrina...stayed at fancy hotels in Chicago once a month for a year, just to do it. Took a cross country train trip to our first ever Joshua Frase Dream Team Party in Boston. Yep...27 hours on a train. Pat’s flown to Vegas and hit the strip like a mad man, his only vivid memory? Collecting the postcards they hand out on the street with naked women on them, advertising escorts. Pat’s been on pirate ship cruises out in the middle of the Atlantic and dinner cruises out in the middle of Lake Michigan the list is endless. We let Pat live his life, in doing so, we also live life. Patrick starts Second City Improv in Chicago this coming October. His goal is to be a stand-up sitting down comedian.

With that being said we have also lived through the unimaginable. Two spontaneous liver ruptures. A diagnosis of hepatic peliosis which landed

him in three medical journals and doctors from around the country coming to see Pat and his amazing liver. Nobody wants to be famous for an exploding liver, but Pat took the opportunity. He is my hero! His strength is amazing, his constitution of steel is admired by many. I'm the lucky one to call him son. God blessed us with this unique individual. I am who I am because of my boys. My approach on this from day 1 with little cliff was either we can let this diagnosis take over our lives or we can take over the diagnosis. We choose NOT to let the diagnosis take over our lives.

My oldest children, Michael and Brittany are who they are because of their brothers. Strong, compassionate, loving adults. Don't get me wrong, they have all fought, hit each other, swore at each other and not talked for months, but siblings will be siblings and Patrick is no exception. I think his siblings would say he is a pretty good brother. He limits his insults to a minimum, always has a joke to tell, is a great listener and loves beyond all boundaries. The strong man in our circus is our oldest Michael, by the tender age 16 he knew what it felt like to lose a brother, and overcome some of his own challenges. Today he is an engineer like his dad, living his life, and building his body to what he now calls MEGA MAN body. Brittany is our tightrope walker. Her steps in life are calculated, precise and well thought out. She has blossomed into a beautiful, multi-layered woman. We are so proud of her. Brittany is married to our amazing and accepting son-in-law Dan. They own a home not far from us and I must say they are so fun to have around. Patrick became an uncle last August. Brittany and Dan blessed us with a beautiful baby girl, Eleanor Rose aka Ellie. She is a perfect addition to our family. Patrick is a proud uncle, Ellie loves him, what's not to love about free wheelchair rides! Besides what circus doesn't have rides??

Am I happy always? No, there are days my heart breaks for all the things Pat can't do, on those days, as with most days, I look to God to

give me strength. Looking back I know without a doubt God carried us. He still does and our faith has propelled us. We have a mission, Pat has a mission, we haven't quite figured it out but as with everything else we will. I haven't mentioned my other Rock... The RINGMASTER, Cliff Sr. my husband, my best friend, my spiritual leader and the wonderful father to our children. He has worked so hard so I didn't have to. I'm still in awe of his giving nature and his ability to be strong when I am weak. I'm also in awe that at almost 52 years old and 27 years of marriage he is still pretty darn sexy to me!! He has encouraged me to keep going and I'm guessing we are a tag team pushing each other further on this journey. I thank God for him and I know we were put together to fulfill this most amazing mission. I'd like to mention a few things that God added to story and to our family. Azure & Malik. My sweet little stinkers. Azure came to us at 2 days old from Safe Families. His mother needed time to sort things out in her life. When Azure was 18 months his mom came to live with us, a new life, a new culture and eventually a new woman. I couldn't be prouder of her. I love her like family and Cliff and I are Godparents to our stinker Azure who is now 4, and his little brother Nathan. Although we don't see him as often because he lives an hour away, our time spent together is joyful. Last year we were blessed to be able to open our home once again to Malik. A two year old darling with Short bowel syndrome. The system is failed and baby boy had to be removed this past April. Our hearts break and he is missed and if ever a chance to get him back comes around we will take it. God has written our story and he doesn't start anything he doesn't finish. I wake every morning excited for another blank page to fill. Until my story ends...It's the greatest show on earth. Thank you GOD!!

Written by the freak of the show "The chameleon lady" able to adapt to any environment 😊

