

## **Sunday, June 22, 2003 – 2:30 p.m.**

The last few days have been pretty challenging. On Thursday morning when Tracy and I woke up in the motel room we had stayed, I was not feeling myself. Noticeably irritated, my energy had gone from a 7 or 8 to a 2. It was everything I could do to muster enough energy to get showered and dressed for our big day in Myrtle Beach. Finally, we got to Myrtle Beach round 3:30 p.m. on Thursday afternoon. The weather was sunny, but by the time we found a hotel we could afford and had unpacked, I didn't have much energy left to do anything except sit back and watch TV. It was Must See NBC after all.

Around 6 p.m., I was determined not to let this HIV get the better of me on my mini-vacation, so I put on my green swim trunks and headed downstairs to check out the beach. I had taken my "Power of Full Engagement" book with me in hopes that I would commit myself to sitting down and reading it. Unfortunately, the wind was so powerful on the beach that I wasn't able to get one page read before the wind would flip twelve more. I took it as a sign I should be doing something else, so I went to the pool area. Our hotel wasn't very occupied because there weren't many people in the two pools. They even had a hot tub, but there were three adults and a kid in it so I just sat in the pool in the shallow end, letting my aching body relax in the luke-warm water. This was exactly what my body needed. I kept a close eye on the hot tub, though, until one of the guys, and his son, got out. I swam from the shallow end to the deep end of the pool I was in and then got out and walked by the hot tub. I asked the middle-aged couple if it was relaxing. They said it was, of course, as I stepped in. Oh, wow! I had never been in a hot tub and this one felt incredible. I commented to the couple, as I was completely relaxed, that it didn't seem that Myrtle Beach was very busy. In a real southern twang, the lady said the area had recently had a lot of bad weather and assumed that was why. After I sat in the hot tub for a few more minutes, I got out and went back up to the room. It was now time for Must See NBC Thursday, so Tracy and I watched Friends together then decided we better get ready to go eat dinner. We had decided we wanted seafood, but we didn't know where we were going to eat, so drove around in the pouring-down rain until we spotted a seafood restaurant. By now, the rain had become a torrential downpour, so we sat in the car a few minutes hoping it would let up. After about five minutes, we decided to make a run for it, only to get to the door a few minutes after 9 p.m. and find out they closed at 9. Totally disappointed, but not surprised, I ran back to the car to pick up Tracy. Soaking wet, we drove to Captain D's drive-thru where we waited for 15 minutes to get semi-warm food. We went back to the hotel and crashed on the beds and watched TV. I was so exhausted that I fell asleep after ER went off. That's the first time I've fallen asleep before 1 a.m. in a LONG time. I woke up around 7:30 a.m. on Friday, with Tracy already starting her day with our daily wake and bake prayer. As we watched the Today show on NBC, I wanted so badly to go down to the beach and sit for a while before we had to leave, but I didn't have the energy. I felt bad that I didn't have my normal energy level because I didn't want to spoil Tracy's fun.

We decided to go see Tracy's mom first, so we drove to the hotel where she works. After we talked with her awhile, we went to the Ripley's Believe It or Not museum, which was interesting, but far from what I had anticipated. We also went to the Ripley's 4-D Adventure Theater, which threw us around in our chairs. It was as exhilarating as a roller

coaster ride, and disappointingly just as short as one, too. As soon as we left the 4-D theater, it started pouring the rain again, so I went to the car and came to pick princess Tracy up at the curb. By now, Tracy knew that I wanted to go home because of how badly I felt, so we went back to where her mom worked so she could tell her goodbye. We finally got on the road around 3:30 p.m. and began our journey home. We drove around for an hour, until Tracy wanted to stop and ask for directions. It turned out that my instincts were right, as usual, and we were headed in the right direction in the first place. By now, my energy level had dropped considerably so I asked Tracy to drive. I got her pillow out of the trunk and reclined in the passenger seat. I guess I must've dozed off because when I sat up it was dark and we were already in Emporia, VA. WE finally made it back to Tracy's house in Hampton around 10:30 p.m. I hugged her goodbye and drove back to Virginia Beach. I was so glad to be home, but still had a restless urge to drive to West Virginia. I needed to feel the love of my family, but I didn't want to have to drain any more energy telling them I was HIV-positive. I knew that they wouldn't understand, and I didn't want my mom to worry constantly about my health. I woke up on Saturday morning to a beautiful sunny day. Nancy knocked on my door to let me know my mo maws on the phone. She was having major issues with a computer virus. My mom is not very computer savvy, so it's difficult sometimes trying to explain to her how to correct things, especially over the phone. She was noticeably frustrated as most of us are when we have computer issues, so immediately the thought popped into my head that this was the opportunity I had been waiting for. I would be able to go home for a visit, but wouldn't have to divulge my health concerns. I immediately started getting my things together to make the trip home. I got to my mom's around 6:30 p.m. on Saturday evening. My nephew, Conner, was inside playing, and began to show off for me as soon as he saw me. It didn't take long to fix mom's computer. All I had to do was install the anti-virus program and run it to check for viruses. I spent the rest of the evening changing out at my mom's playing with Conner. He loves it when I chase him around the house, then having him chase me. I went to bed fairly early, around 1 a.m. I slept on the couch in the living room, because I knew I would sleep late if I stayed in Dawn's old room and I wanted to spend time with Conner before his dad, Teddy, came to pick him up around noon. My mom woke up early as usually and baked some cookies for me while I played with Conner outside. After Conner went with his dad for the day, my mom and sister decided to go visit their friend, Steve, who lives in Charleston. After everyone left, I sat out in the yard and started writing in my journal. It was a beautiful Sunday with the sun shining down, but I kept getting bitten by deer flies, so I took it as a sign to stop writing and go visit my dad before I left. It was difficult not telling my family about what was weighing so heavily on my mind, but I knew that I'd really gain nothing by telling them. I didn't want them to have to experience the emotional trauma, but more importantly, I knew that their knowledge of the disease would cause them to worry unnecessarily. I figured that when and if the time came, I'd tell them. I can only hope that day never comes. Until then, I plan to keep on keeping on and appreciate my family and the time I spend with them. I made a promise with myself that I would do everything I could to make time to spend with my family and go home to West Virginia as much as I could. Even though right now my level of courage wasn't one I could tell them everything, I was still able to feel the love that I can only feel at home in West Virginia.