

Let's  Party!

Collections!

Second Annual 2nd SATURDAY
226 BALDWIN AVENUE (off 3rd / Independence)

Street Party & Food Festival!

Saturday
OCTOBER 14



Raffles
7-Shirts

12:00 noon to dusk..rain or shine
Music by:

Donna Duncan

& the Manic Mood Swings

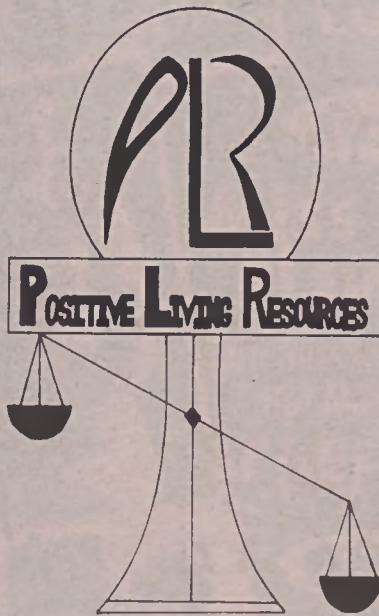
One Voice - Jazz Ensemble

Caricature Artist .. Stress Buster Massages
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DJ:
Mich'l

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Positive Living Resources donates a portion of all proceeds to local and national associations dedicated to fighting HIV and AIDS.

Tom Briggs

Continued from page 13

knocked me out for the intubation. When I woke, I felt like I was suffocating. I didn't feel like I was getting enough air. I couldn't take a deep breath or even a normal breath. The machine was breathing much too shallow for me. And there was no way to communicate this to the doctors and nurses!

What in heavens name did you do?

They could see that I was panicking. I guess that's a normal reaction when somebody shoves a tube down your throat. Alarms measuring heartbeat and blood pressure — and whatever other body indicators — went off. They sedated me with morphine. Then, one time, as my eyes bulged from my head and terror reigned on my face, and alarms threatened apocalypse, a very sweet Filipino nurse named Stepha leaned over my bed and yelled "Just relax, Tom" several times. Somehow, the next time I came to I remembered her words. I decided that I was getting nowhere by letting the machines and morphine dictate my state of consciousness, so I relaxed. It sounds like an easy and logical conclusion but logic is only relative to one's ability to respire.

How did you tell them that you felt like you were suffocating? Or could you?

They came up with a method of communication. It was long and tedious, but it worked, and I had nothing but time. They made an alphabet board. A nurse or friend would hold the board and point to each letter staring with "A." They would watch for the subtle shrug of my shoulders when they hit the letter I wanted.

Had you known up to now that you had HIV?

At the onset of the syndrome, I didn't know. The doctor had taken blood but the results didn't come in until after I was on the respirator. They took spinal fluid, though, and that's when they found the HIV. I was told that I was HIV positive just before I was intubated.

That must have been a powerful experience.

It was a powerful laxative. I immediately asked for a bedpan. It seemed that everything I had inside of me came out convulsively. I turned as white as the sheets, and that's no exaggeration. After the nurses cleaned me up, I asked the doctor for five minutes alone with my lover. I made a very abbreviated life confession to my lover and told him how much I loved him. That was all there was time for. Then the nurse came in and administered the morphine for the procedure.

It must have been a nightmare.

Actually the nightmare subsided after about a week.

How so?

Well, I had a very powerful spiritual encounter — kind of a rendezvous with eternity.

What do you mean?

I had an experience of a higher entity, an elevated consciousness, God, if you will.

You mean God spoke with you?

In simplified terms, yes.

Are you born again?

Not at all.

What did God say?

Many things. I was told this paralysis was here for me to heal. I was receiving a healing. I learned that we are all in a continual process of healing.

What does God sound like?

Well, first, I'm not completely comfortable with us using the word "God" here. I'm

not trying to identify "God" for you. There is too much subjectivity connected with that word. I was simply aware of a very powerful benevolent presence. The voice made no sound, it simply communicated ideas to me. The ideas were very clear, though, much more clear than words. It was like being directly connected to the telephone line of the universe — no earpiece or speaker. Just very articulate, explicit information and a very joyful feeling.

So, here you are, completely paralyzed from head to toe, having a powerful spiritual experience. Did you heal? Is there any medical treatment for Guillain-Barre Syndrome? You look like everything operates.

There is no known treatment for the cause of Guillain-Barre Syndrome. It's difficult to even diagnose because there is no known microbe floating around in the body that science can detect. There is a treatment that is experimental which some medical researchers believe may have an affect on the condition. It is called plasmapheresis. It's a procedure during which one's blood is continuously removed from the body, filtered and then sent back into the body. If given early, paralysis may disappear earlier than if no plasmapheresis was done. A Hickman catheter is implanted for the purpose of the treatment. Each treatment takes about two and a half hours. They did eight of these on me.

Did it have an affect on you?

We don't know for sure, but between whatever the doctors did and whatever the rest of the universe did, I have recovered quite well.

Was there any lingering effect?

Yes. Certain small muscles, especially in my face don't work 100 percent. Also, my vocal cords were traumatized from the intubation.

It sounds as though your singing ability was affected.

Yes. All of the components for singing — the lungs, the cords, the face muscles — were affected. I worked with a vocal coach for several months following my release from the hospital. I still go to aerobics classes about four times a week to strengthen my lungs. I believed that my voice would come back in a few months, but even now after five years I still need vocal exercise.

Tell me about "Moonlight," the song.

"Moonlight" is a fantasy that came to me. In a metaphysical sense, it is very real. It tells the story of how my life has been. I feel that probably everyone has this same feeling that I'm trying to describe. It's the feeling of one perfect night, of a perfect sharing of love. And then it goes away. Either by your lover leaving or the two of you being separated by fate or for some reason but nothing ever seems to replace the feeling of that one experience. Even if you are lucky enough to live a lifetime with your perfect love, it seems that you can't duplicate the love you shared during your innocence.

What about your next CD? It's called Rescue Me. What is that about?


Rescue Me speaks of the longing between two worlds — this one and the life beyond what we know.

You want to be rescued from this world?

I think we all do. In life, we are all moving toward a perfect destiny. And we long for it. Most of us recognize the longing, but we don't identify it as a longing for our ultimate perfect destiny. But we all feel the pull in our solar plexus.

I wish you the very best with Moonlight. It's a beautiful album.

Thank you.



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