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Ed Marshall's Struggle with a Mysterious Virus Almost Claims His Life

- A common fruit helped keep him alive

By SHANTAY IOSIA

(Nov. 19, 2004) The deceitful creature crept into Ed Marshall's unwary body and silently began its game of charades. First, it disguised itself as a common cold, then the flu and finally pneumonia.



Ed Marshall

The unknown virus, which appeared in September 2003, confused doctors and forced Marshall, the Logistics Department assignment coordinator clerk at the Regional Rebuild Center, to the edge of his life.

In the end, it was a common fruit – available on every grocer's shelf – that helped keep Marshall alive. But, the struggle he endured while he fought for his life and his doctors searched for clues to a cure was a long and difficult one.

Ed Marshall had struggled with a heart murmur and respiratory problems as a child and was accustomed to the diagnosis. But he grew suspicious as the new and puzzling symptoms continued into its sixth month.

An unidentified virus

During a routine checkup, test results revealed an unidentified virus similar to hepatitis B. His alarmed doctor immediately contacted Marshall who returned for more tests.

The cunning virus tried to convince doctors it didn't exist, but as Marshall's symptoms progressed, doctors worked relentlessly to find the source.

They soon discovered that the virus had attacked Marshall's heart muscle. The muscle deterioration prevented his heart from functioning beyond 25 percent of its ability.

Doctors struggled to preserve Marshall's heart while attempting to identify and destroy the virus. Meanwhile, Marshall experienced periodic episodes, or moments when his heart stopped beating.

Suggested a heart transplant

Doctors were able to revive him each time but as his heart weakened, functioning at a feeble 13 percent,

they told him there was no more they could do. They suggested a heart transplant and said that, if he survived the operation, he would remain on disability for the rest of his life.



Metro's Ed Marshall, lower right, says his brush with death has strengthened his family and made him a more patient person. With him are his wife Gloria, and children, from left Jordan, Rashawnda and Rachard.

A defeated Marshall surrendered and prepared farewell speeches to his wife, Gloria, and children, Rachard, Rashawnda and Jordan.

"At that point no sermons or scriptures came to mind," says Marshall, a Christian. "I was just frightened. When a person approaches the brink of death, that's when the real decision comes. I could either take (a new) heart or die."

Then, a doctor who was on the team treating Marshall came to his bedside and offered the first words of hope he had heard in over a week. He advised his patient to exhaust other options before considering a transplant.

Awoke to an odd smell

Marshall agreed, but his heart continued its irregular patterns. When it stopped for the third time, he awoke to an odd smell -- the scent of bananas.

"You don't have to worry about that happening anymore," he recalls the doctor saying. "Your heart was craving potassium."

A medium-size banana contains 467 milligrams of potassium, which helps regulate the heart rate and lower a person's blood pressure. The potassium helped stabilize Marshall's heart, allowing him to avoid the transplant.

Marshall defied medical theories and was released from the hospital with the promise of a full recovery. He regained his strength and the anonymous virus crept out as silently as it made its invasion.

Now healthy and back on the job at the RRC, Marshall says, "It was a really horrible experience. I pray that no person would have to go through what I had to endure."