



# Wind Therapy on a *Harley*

Dorothy McGann, sixty-eight year old grandmother of three, finds insight on the road riding on a Harley. It's the kind of inspiration that has taught her lessons in life.

McGann's road has been full of detours. It came with her diagnosis of chronic lung disease (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and pulmonary fibrosis). Gradually, she was forced to use a canister of oxygen most of the time.

As her pulmonary fibrosis progresses, the damage to her lungs becomes more severe. She experienced breathlessness with minor physical activity such as showering and getting dressed. Speaking on the phone and eating becomes more difficult and sometimes nearly impossible, according to the Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation.

"COPD, also known as emphysema and chronic bronchitis, is a very serious disease, and the third leading cause of death in the United States. The good news is that COPD is often preventable and treatable," reports the American Lung Association.

After smoking for over 40 years, McGann stopped her habit. But it did leave consequences. She now takes over two dozen pills to control the progression of her lung diseases and to decrease her low back pain.

She finds that being on continuous air is a benefit, but it also creates some problems. Dismounting from her husband's Harley, in Sturgis, South Dakota, McGann's feet got caught up in the air hose connected to the canister and she fell. It was a fall that created temporary memory loss. She believes that she sustained a possible concussion.

But prior to her fall, she was gradually succumbing to chronic lung disease. She also endured abdominal surgery to repair her aortic aneurysm, a month after her fall.

She took a break from her Harley adventures because she was too weak. "I could barely walk to the mailbox," says McGann. Her pulmonary specialist, Dr. Shea Eckardt, referred her to pulmonary rehabilitation in order to get her strength back.

After she received the initial bout of pulmonary education

from Eastbay Rehabilitation Center, McGann learned how to improve her breathing. She says that the newfound information was life altering. She admits that the breathing exercises were a total different way of breathing with activity. Her respiratory therapist, JoAnn Marote-Pugh concurs and states, "We don't breathe to take in oxygen; we breathe to blow off carbon dioxide. So, the breathing emphasis in pulmonary rehab is actually blowing out and expelling carbon dioxide waste and learning how to do that with every activity," she says.

Therapists Alex Gollier and Michael Agustin made sure that she could easily get back onto her husband's Harley before her discharge. They report that her ability will be better ensured with their prescribed continuing home exercise program.

Every week each exercise got easier for McGann. "I now see a huge difference in her ability to get around and she has more endurance and can walk further," states Bob McGann. He's thrilled that his wife is stronger and can spend quality time with their grandchildren. That's paramount for the McGanns.

He's now planning their next Harley trip. "I think we'll go to the (Florida) Keys," he says.

McGann says she's looking forward to being on the bike and feeling the wind, but "I am not going to hold my breath around the corners anymore," she says.

Many people would say that life is full of blind corners. "You never know what the road—or life, for that matter—will bring," says McGann. Now resolved to get in as many bike trips as she can, she's looking forward to a little wind therapy.

For more information regarding pulmonary rehabilitation, call (727) 530-7100. East Bay Rehabilitation Center offers outpatient and inpatient services for short or long term care. It is located at 4470 E Bay Dr., Clearwater, FL 33764.