

IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH—Marylin Nease—Texas

My husband of 58 years hadn't felt well for four days. I was waiting for him to decide to see a doctor.

"Last night, I thought I was getting better, but I'm worse today. It's been one health problem after another the last few years. It's all just too much," Charles complained.

"Well, it beats the alternative," I said gently, hoping he'd chuckle, (the *alternative* being *death*), and find his good spirits again. In the last 25 years, he'd had two cancers (one, stage 4), several major surgeries, and a heart attack. He was entitled to feel he'd had enough.

The recent start of football season was good medicine. He enjoyed the season's opening games, and we talked about players, coaches, the college portal, the money, the plays, and so forth. But the excitement didn't last because he was sick again, and he was tired of being sick.

This afternoon, he decided. He asked about my schedule so I could take him, he made the appointment, and tomorrow we'll get the information we need. Progress!

Today, we met with a doctor, new to us but in the same medical practice as Charles' urology oncologist 25 years ago. After the Q&A, specimen collection, and bladder scan, the preliminary best guess is a urinary infection, to be confirmed by the pending lab and scan interpretations. In the meantime, I've picked up a prescription, and Charles has taken his first dose. Progress!

One of the things couples naturally do for each other is watch the other, and when a change occurs, they ask, "Are you okay?" I had my first experience with this ritual toward the end of our first year of marriage. We were college students and had been home a short time after completing a five-week Spanish language program in Mexico. San Miguel de Allende was our home base, but we traveled to other parts of Mexico as well. Charles and I and eight other students rode in two college vehicles, one driven by our Mormon Spanish professor, the other by a Catholic priest who spoke Spanish. We had a grand time seeing sights, learning history, and practicing Spanish. Home again, Charles complained of abdominal pain. As days passed, he hunched over on all fours trying to find a comfortable position. When he asked for help, we went to our local hospital ER. Tests showed hepatitis A, probably contracted from contaminated water or food during our trip. In hospital for two weeks, besides medication and rest, he was to eat all the nutritious food he wanted, the goal being to get his appetite, weight, and health back.

Yes, we've had 58 years of keeping an eye on each other. We watch, wait, gently urge, then together seek help. Tonight, after we kissed and said, "Night" and "Love you," Charles added, "Thank you for taking me to the doctor and picking up my prescription. I couldn't have done that." *In sickness and in health*