

## Chickens, the Fourth of July, Fibro, and Hurricanes

I was at a Fourth of July party and found myself amidst 17 chickens and a rooster, who undoubtedly was one very happy male. Apparently, the chickens had been blown with Hurricane Wilma's winds and ended up in my friend's yard. She fed them and they are still there. It rained on the 4th and most of us were inside. This same friend does not like air conditioning, so the front and back doors were open, creating a wonderful opportunity for the chickens to have free reign. There were two results of this unusual situation for me. One, I did not eat the barbequed chicken, and two, after hearing how the chickens arrived, I remembered that I was planning to write a bit about hurricane season for those of us with fibro.

The next day when I went through some files on my computer, I discovered that I had already written about Wilma and totally forgotten about it several times! So, I won't have much more work to do!

### HISTORY OF THIS ESSAY ON HURRICANE WILMA

**October 2005:** Wilma slams into South Florida

**Date unknown:** I write this article

**April 22, 2006:** Found article on computer. Fibro fog erases memory of having written this essay! Did nothing about it.

**April 13, 2007:** Memory once again erased until Marly suggested I write a hurricane article. I immediately forgot about it.

**JULY 4, 2007:** Chickens bring me back once again, and this time I will offer it to you.

## AND HERE AT LAST . . . HURRICANE WILMA AND FIBRO

Note: Despite being 2½ years old, this article is still relevant. The “Suggestions” are new. Finally:

This past week for the very first time since taking my deposit, the shutter company called ME! I’ve been calling them 3 times a week for 14 months. Hurricane Wilma really scared people into action. Shutter companies had 10 times as many requests than normal, and they were not prepared. The call was bad and good news. The bad news is that they can’t promise to install our shutters until after the 2006 hurricane season is over. The good news is that they didn’t go bankrupt as did three other major shutter companies, and I’m getting my money back. As I’m sitting at my computer reminiscing while shuddering at the thought that Hurricane Wilma was only a Category 2 in S. Florida, yet changed our landscape, perhaps not forever, but certainly a year later. Suddenly, I vaguely remembered writing about Wilma, so I searched my computer files, and indeed I did! So I am posting this (now two) year-old description because I hope to continue to write about life with fibro. **[DESPITE THE PREVIOUS SENTENCE WRITTEN ABOUT A YEAR AGO, I FORGOT YET AGAIN.]**

October 2005

I live in South Florida, where we were smacked hard by Hurricane Wilma. My husband and I watched out the window until three very large trees were blown into our pool, the windows started bulging, and the walls **groaned**--I can’t think of any word more descriptive. At that point I ran as fast as my achy body would carry me to a closet, joined by my bird and dog, who had never been formally introduced, though Spike (I did not pick the names for our pets) has been living here with Barbie June (who would name a dog Barbie June?) for three years. We were lucky as far as our house went. I silently cursed the storm shutter people, who took our money but never put up our shutters. I have been calling every day since the hurricane to report that Yvette was last seen clinging to a palm tree and blowing in the wind. Their message machine is full. We were not alone. Many, many people were without shutters that were ordered months and months before. Now they are also without roof tiles and little hope of getting new ones before the next hurricane. It’s almost embarrassing to complain considering what Katrina did, but it did give us all a taste of what could come.

**SUGGESTION 1: DECIDE WHAT YOU WILL DO WHEN A HURRICANE HITS. DO YOU HAVE A ROOM WITH NO WINDOWS? I DON'T, BUT WE DID PUT UP RHINO SHIELD (SUPPOSEDLY WILL WITHSTAND 150 MPH WINDS IN ONE ROOM. IT PROBABLY WON'T WORK, AND I HOPE I NEVER HAVE TO FIND OUT!**

My neighbor lost a very large screen enclosure. During the hurricane, one of the steel supports for his screen enclosure was banging against his house. Much to his wife's horror, he actually left the house with a long piece of rope tied around his waist. The end of the rope was held by his petite, hysterical wife. He carried another piece of rope in an attempt to tie the beam to something. He lost his screen, but he didn't lose his house or more important, his life!

**SUGGESTION 2: REMEMBER THAT YOU HAVE FIBRO. DON'T DO ANYTHING STUPID THAT WOULD CAUSE YOU HARM BECAUSE AMBULANCES ARE NOT AVAILABLE DURING HURRICANES. DO NOT FALL! PREPARATION IS VERY IMPORTANT, BUT DON'T DO THE HEAVY WORK, AS YOU WILL SURELY PAY THE PRICE LATER. BE IN CHARGE OF THINGS SUCH AS GATHERING PHOTOS AND IMPORTANT PAPERS TO BE PUT IN A SAFE PLACE. MAKE A LIST OF PEOPLE YOU NEED TO CONTACT. IF YOU DON'T HAVE PHONE CONTACT, FIND SOMEONE WHO DOES AND GIVE THEM YOUR LIST OF PEOPLE TO NOTIFY. IF YOU ARE SINGLE, CALL ONE OF YOUR MARRIED FIBRO FRIENDS WHO WILL MAKE HER HUSBAND COME HELP YOU!**

Our streets look ravished. Trees, those not pulled up like toothpicks, lost all their leaves. A 35-foot palm tree with no fronds is not a pretty thing. There are still people without electricity two and a half weeks later, though ours returned in 6 days. I had fled to my nephew's house after two days without my heating pad, where I promptly had a fibro flare-up! It helped that my nephew is a doctor. His prescription: "Go to bed." I stayed there, luxuriating in the air-conditioned house and hot showers while my husband stayed home with our pets.

**SUGGESTION 3: TRY TO IDENTIFY A FRIEND AFTER A HURRICANE WHO HAS NOT LOST ELECTRICITY AND BEG TO VISIT. AIR-CONDITIONING AND ELECTRICAL POWER IS SOMETHING OUR COMMUNITY CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT. MY NEPHEW AND FAMILY LIVE IN WESTON. THEIR POWER LINES ARE UNDERGROUND. WANT THE NUMBER??**

I don't leave home much, but every time I do since Wilma struck all of South Florida, it is as if it were the first time because I see further destruction. Not only are the traffic lights not working, in most places there *are* no traffic lights, which were probably in the middle of people's living rooms. Huge signs showing highway interchanges are gone. There are enormous trees still surrounded by concrete that are lying in the road. The randomness of the hurricane is mind-boggling. I realized yesterday that my neighborhood has no street signs. A

poignant moment came when I was walking Barbie and saw a bush with not a single leaf, but one beautiful pink flower. That flower is symbolic to me of what happened here, and the true horrors of Katrina, which destroyed lives and the city where I met my husband. I forgot to take a picture of this flower, though I think of it often.

**SUGGESTION 3; REALIZE THAT THIS HORROR IS TEMPORARY. IT WILL NO DOUBT MAKE YOUR FIBRO WORSE, BUT IT ISN'T FOREVER. ENLIST THE HELP OF YOUR FAMILY, NEIGHBORS, AND FRIENDS TO HELP CLEAN UP. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO DO THIS YOURSELF. DON'T FEEL BAD IF YOU DON'T CONTRIBUTE. REMEMBER THAT THE RESULTING FLARE-UP WOULD BE FAR WORSE AND COULD TAKE YOU OUT OF COMMISSION FOR A LONG TIME. EXPLAIN THIS TO YOUR LOVED ONES YET AGAIN.**

We'll come back, especially the vegetation, which grows very quickly in Florida. [Only recently were major road sign back, two years later.] In the meantime, it's interesting to get a peek at the very wealthy people's houses that were blocked from view by masses of beautiful landscaping and thick concrete walls. I saw those houses for the first time in 25 years. It's not much fun, though, to drive through neighborhoods where most houses have blue tarp instead of roofs.

Apparently, the hurricane wreaked havoc on folks with fibro. I went to my rheumatologist this week aching all over. My son is getting married next week in another state. I had to try to do something for the pain. I got several trigger point shots. For those who believe that fibro isn't "real" I would ask: "Would you subject yourself to shots in your neck, back, hips, hands, feet, and legs for attention?" The ones I've had in my feet and hands were particularly fun.

**SUGGESTION 4: YOU WILL MOST LIKELY HAVE A FLARE-UP EVEN IF YOU DON'T TAKE PART IN CLEAN-UP. MAKE SURE YOU HAVE AT LEAST A MONTH OF YOUR MEDICATION ON HAND. I JUST REALIZED I HAVE ONLY 4 LIMBITROL PILLS. IF A HURRICANE HIT TOMORROW, I'D BE IN TROUBLE. WE ALL KNOW TO DO THIS, BUT THIS FIBRO FOG ATTACKS FREQUENTLY, SO CHECK YOUR MEDS RIGHT NOW!**

So, despite pain and fatigue, I'm getting ready to leave for the wedding in three days. Yesterday, my sister called. Her tooth fell out, but she told the dentist she couldn't do anything until after the wedding. Not good. Luckily, it wasn't a front tooth! Last night I heard from the mother of the bride. She too had gone to the dentist. She too said no root canals before the wedding. She also told me that she and the bride's sister were buying Angie a beautiful nightgown and wondered if I might want to get my son silk PJs.

Why not?

Online shopping is made for people with fibro. The reason is obvious. You don't have to put on real clothes, fix your hair, and put on make-up to order on-line. Macy's had sent an e-mail offer of free shipping. I was delighted to find black silk pajamas for only \$40! I ordered them and then went to bed.

When I received confirmation of my purchase, I discovered that I had bought only the top. That's probably all he needs. No further discussion is necessary. Then I realized my finger was throbbing. Since Wilma, we have had a mysterious pool of water between the fridge and the sink. I ran my hand under the refrigerator. No water, but lots of objects, including a piece of glass that, of course, went into my finger. Oh Lord. I could see the wedding, with two women with swollen faces in dental pain and the mother of the groom with her middle finger swathed in white gauze bandages, sticking up ever so slightly. So I drug myself to a walk-in clinic, this being Saturday. On the way I saw a neighborhood dog wandering down the street. I stopped the car, picked him up, and took him to his home. I then slipped in water in the driveway and landed on my arm and rear end. That made my finger feel much better. The "walk in" physician said I had to go to the emergency room, but I was too tired. I came home and will see what tomorrow brings.

SUGGESTION 5: REMEMBER THAT LIFE GOES ON. TRY TO APPROACH IT WITH HUMOR. IT'S HARD TO LAUGH WHEN YOUR LIFE HAS BEEN TOTALLY ALTERED BY FIBRO AND/OR CHRONIC FATIGUE OR MCS, BUT IT HELPS YOU FEEL BETTER. TRY TO LAUGH EVERY DAY. IT WILL MAKE A BIT OF DIFFERENCE. PREPARE FOR A HURRICANE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN RIGHT NOW, THEN FORGET ABOUT IT AND HOPE WE WILL BE BLESSED AS WE WERE LAST YEAR--NO HURRICANES!