



My Story

By Mr. T

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I was born in Gulfport, Mississippi on October 24, 1995. The family that has me now was not my first family. I had to find another family when I was about 10 months old because my family was having problems and they couldn't keep me. I was fortunate to find the family that has me now. They had lost their dog Jake, a fifteen-year-old Black Lab, and they were looking for a small dog. My new family George and Linda Hicks are from Talladega, Al. I would love to tell you how my Mom found me, but that is a separate story altogether.

I enjoyed good health until the last couple of years. I always coughed a little when I got excited and my Mom was told it really wasn't anything to be concerned about. I have been traveling with my family all over the southeast for the past 6 years. My Dad is a general contractor. Being a contractor's dog you get to ride on all these wonderful machines, like a backhoe, a loader, and a tractor. My favorite ride I believe was my Mom's bicycle. She had a big basket put on the front just for me and I would bark just about wherever we went. I barked so much my Mom told everyone we couldn't afford a horn. I loved going with my family to the office trailer everyday and having a pillow under my Dad's computer desk at the construction sites. I always enjoyed meeting the people that came to see my Dad.

The coughing was getting worse at times and we couldn't understand what really was causing it. We kept checking with my Doctor and I would get better so we thought it was some type of bronchitis.

I began coughing a lot around June 27, 2005. My Mom took me to a different Doctor in another town because my regular Doctor was out of town. Well, the regular Doctor was

also out of town and an assistant was in charge. She told my Mom that I needed an x-ray to determine what was wrong. She diagnosed my condition as Collapsed Trachea. That was the first we had heard that term used. The young assistant told my Mom that I had just 6 months to live. My Mom was devastated and she cried most of the way home. I tried to lick all her tears away, but they sure were coming down pretty fast.

My regular Doctor returned and my Mom told him what happened while he was away. He told us just an x-ray could not diagnose this problem and he said that the young assistant was wrong about the time limit with this condition. He made us feel a little better. He asked if we would we like to go to Auburn University and have it diagnosed. He called but they were not giving us much hope if it was CT so we declined going. My Doctor said the best bet would be to control the coughing with medicine. We fought this problem for about a year until it got so bad that my Mom had to rush me to my Doctor several times for tranquilizer shots to stop the coughing. My Doctor and my Mom talked it over again about sending me to Auburn. My Doctor called, but they still didn't offer much hope. My Mom just couldn't believe that there was no hope so she started searching the Internet and eventually ended up at a site called Yorkie Rescue. They told us that the University of Tennessee was specializing in this condition. My Doctor called and I had my first visit on June 27 at UT. It is amazing but that was one year to the day that the young assistant told me that I would be dead in 6 months. Guess I fooled her didn't I!

UT did a complete evaluation and they told us that I indeed had CT and it was in the category 3 and 4 stages, which is the worse condition. My Mom talked it over with the Doctors and they decided to install 2 metal stents in my neck when we got back from vacation. That would also give them time to order and receive the stents from the manufacturers. These are the same stents used for humans and they have to order them by size. They set up my appointment on July 12. The doctors put me to sleep and slipped the stents in and I went home the next day.

It was amazing. I was not coughing at all. My throat was a little sore from the tubes they had to put down my throat during the surgery, but other than that we were all just amazed at the result. I was doing just great for about 2 weeks. I then began gagging really bad and couldn't get comfortable. My Mom called the Doctors and we went back to UT on August 3 when they discovered the stents had fractured. They weren't sure what to do since they had never removed stents before. We came home on the 4th with some strong medicine to keep me from coughing. A dog named Ringo had the same problem with fractured stents. They discovered how to remove the stents from Ringo while I was recuperating.

On Monday the 14 of August the Doctors removed the fractured pieces, but parts of both stents were doing what they were supposed to do and holding my trachea open. Then on Tuesday my trachea collapsed where there was not a stent to hold it open. They had to rush me to the oxygen tent. I was really struggling for breath. We went through a couple of days where the Doctors and my Mom really didn't know what to do. We all knew I couldn't go home like I was. I could not have survived long outside the oxygen tent.

On Wednesday they decided if just a couple of places in my trachea were collapsed they could put the rings on the outside of my trachea and suture my trachea to them to

hold it open. They have very good success with this procedure. If the area was too large they could put in another stent that had just been donated to the university that they thought would work. On Thursday they looked in my trachea and decided to use the donated stent. It runs from one end of my neck to the other. I sure couldn't go through a metal detector. I would set it off big time.

I did real well during the surgery, but Friday I got into a coughing fit and they had to put me back into the oxygen tent. Friday night I did better and they were able to take me out. I was getting depressed from not seeing my Mom and Dad and I was not eating. The Doctor told my Mom to come to UT on Saturday morning and see how I did when I saw her. They weren't sure if I was going to be able to go home, but I fooled them all. There was nothing else they could do for me at UT so it was just me and my Mom from there.

I was able to come home that Saturday which was August 19 and I have been getting a little better every day. I know I will never be 100% but I will be 12 on October 24, 2006 and my time on this earth is limited anyway. At least I was given a gift of more time to spend with my family.

I want to thank all the Doctors and all the students at the University of Tennessee who took care of me. They were all so kind and compassionate toward me and my Mom. I also want to thank that wonderful lady who came to see me regularly in the hospital and gave me hugs and kisses when my Mom couldn't. It sure made a difference to me and to my Mom. She also gave me a little crocheted angel bunny to watch over me while I am at home. It is still doing its job.

My Mom was curious to find out if my parents had CT. My Mom thought she might have contributed to it. She found my AKC Registration and was lucky to find my breeder. She still lived in Gulfport. She told us that both my parents had this condition. I would just hope that more breeders were just more careful, try to be more responsible and try to breed this condition out of other Yorkies and other breeds of dogs that have this.

Take care,
Mr. T Hicks

P.S. I lost my battle with CT on October 27, 2006. I had just been to UT on Monday the 23 of October for my 2 month check-up. I was doing pretty well. The last stent that they had installed had migrated a little, but was not causing me any problems. I was still gagging when I woke up from my naps, but other than that I was doing okay. UT also discovered that I had an infection in my trachea and in the x-rays they took maybe a mild case of pneumonia. We returned home that Tuesday. On Wednesday I was not feeling well at all. That afternoon about 5:30 my Mom was trying to give me my antibiotic and I almost fell off the couch trying to turn my head away from her. She put me down on the floor and I just couldn't stand up. My Mom immediately called my Doctor and they discussed it, but they both felt that maybe it was the infection causing me to be that way and I had recuperated quickly. I had another bout with that strange feeling about 9:30 that night, but also recuperated quickly and went to sleep.

Thursday morning I did it again and my Mom rushed me to my Doctor who immediately put me on oxygen. He called UT and they asked if my Mom could bring me back. The Doctor and my Mom arranged for me to have an oxygen bottle to take with us just in

case I would need it. Thank goodness they did because Mom had to give me oxygen along the way about 5 times. I sure wouldn't have made it to UT without the oxygen. As soon as I got to UT my friend and my Doctor was standing outside and rushed me to the oxygen chamber. The plan was to stabilize me until the next morning and then perform some more procedures to find out what was going on.

I believe I went into cardiac arrest around 6 that Friday morning. They tried their best to revive me but to no avail. They told my Mom that I had a few spells during the night, but recovered pretty quickly.

Before I left to come home UT scoped my trachea to see if they might find out what exactly happened and if the stent had anything to do with me going into cardiac arrest. They found out the left bronchi had closed completely and I was just living on one lung. Unfortunately the bronchi are not something they can fix at this point.

I had a wonderful and much loved life. There was never a night I didn't spend without my Mom and Dad until I went to UT for my surgeries. That was about 11 years. My family loved me deeply and we fought this condition until my heart couldn't fight it any more.

As I said before, all the Doctors can do is to give you more time to spend with your family. I, and my family, want to thank my Doctor and the Doctors and students at UT who did just that and gave us more time.



My First Time at the Beach

If you would like more information, my Mom said she would be more than happy to talk with you at hickslc@aol.com.