

No Kidding
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EXCERPT

No kidding. I've been told I have Alzheimer's. That's a disease. I've been trying to remember if I have ever had a disease before. I'm 72 as I write this. Two years ago, Norma Jean, my wife, asked me if I would talk to our family doctor about my memory lapses. That resulted in a referral to a psychiatrist, who did a few cognitive tests and asked me a few simple questions like what time it was and what day of the month it was. He concluded a probable diagnosis of mild Alzheimer's. I remember my mother telling me I had had scarlet fever as a child. I remember having my tonsils removed. That was no fun. I've had my share of flu, diarrhea and the itch. But these are not real diseases; each is more of a nuisance. Alzheimer's, now that's a real disease!

After that doctor's visit, I went home and did internet searches on Alzheimer's disease. I've always been a student. I studied engineering before entering the Air Force. I was trained as a flight simulator technician and served four years, but I really wanted to earn my bachelor's degree. I met the sweetest girl on earth during my first deployment. We were married within eleven weeks, just before the Air Force sent me to Morocco. For eighteen months we planned our life long distance. My wife supported my decision to leave the service and complete my degree, even though it meant changing her career dream to become a nurse. I always felt like we both earned that bachelor's degree. I have been a student ever since. I like to learn and this is why I had to find out about this disease.