

ALS Is An Awful Disease

Well, ok, what disease is NOT awful? But ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease) robs a person of his or her motor skills and leaves their mind intact. So essentially, ALS victims are imprisoned in their own body. And ALS often strikes at a young age, and most people struggle with it for less than 3 years before it takes their life. We watched my husband's father struggle with it for over 2 years. We watched as it robbed him of his ability to walk, talk, eat and pretty much everything else. He passed away very peacefully, a week before Christmas. We were all in the room with him, and a hospital volunteer was playing Silent Night on the harp as he passed. It was beautiful, but it's still hard for me to hear that song. The reason I'm bringing this up is because the most famous victim of ALS, besides Lou Gehrig himself, is Stephen Hawking, and I was sorry to read in the news today that he is very ill.

Stephen Hawking is a brilliant scientist and an inspirational man – he has lived with ALS for over 40 years. Lou Gehrig had it for nearly two years before he died at the age of 37. Gehrig's was a New York Yankees player, and he was forced to retire when he was diagnosed with ALS. His record of most career grand slams still holds at 23 today! We watched *The Pride of the Yankees* (which tells the story of Lou Gehrig) with my father-in-law after his diagnosis, and that was tough. Same thing with *Tuesdays With Morrie*... why did my father-in-law want to do that to himself? To get a better grip on what was happening to him, maybe? I don't know.

My father-in-law was a remarkable man. He had the biggest heart of anyone I've ever known, second only to my husband. He was kind, generous, smart, and funny. He knew a lot about everything; especially movies and religion – he had the Bible practically memorized. One of my favorite memories of him was when we took him to the zoo. It was after the ALS had already

taken hold of his body, but his humor was still intact. As we were wheeling his wheelchair over a bumpy bridge at the zoo, he said, "Ahhhh" – not because the ALS had taken away his speech (it hadn't yet) but because it was a bumpy ride and he was jokingly letting the bumps affect his voice. He was taken from us too soon; I wonder what he would have thought of having 7 grandchildren? He's been gone longer than I knew him now – over 8 years. His funeral was on our oldest daughter's first birthday. But anyway... I don't know why I'm going into all of this now. Let's pray for Stephen Hawking. ALS is a terrible disease.

Help save the FROGS!

I have just finished watching a show on Animal Planet and it both disturbed me and gave me some hope. It was called The Vanishing Frog, and so many of our frogs are dying out because of a disease called chytrid fungus. This disease is spreading quickly throughout the entire world and so far, 33% of our frog population is in danger! As many of my friends and family know, frogs are my favorite animal and I want to be able to help them. There is a website, savethefrogs.com and I am going to find a way to help out as much as possible. Frogs are very important for our medicines as well. If that doesn't help convince you the importance of frogs, I'm not sure what will. I would like to ask everyone that I know to help me with my quest to save my favorite animal from going extinct. Spread the news around to anyone you know. We cannot sit around and do nothing while these animals are dying! Things that affect frogs will eventually affect us as well. To save these frogs, we have to start now! We cannot wait, for there are frogs dying and without them, we are in danger! The show made me hide my face many times because of all the pictures of dead

frogs and I refuse to sit around and let them continue to die!
Please, help me!

Blindness

[Blindness](#) is an interesting movie starring [Julianne Moore](#). Think [Outbreak](#), except this time the disease that's afflicting people at a record rate isn't fatal, but it causes sudden blindness. The movie was alright; I liked the ending, but there are a few scenes that are extremely disturbing to watch. As always, I don't want to go into much detail to avoid spoiling it for people. Julianne Moore is a great actress, and her performance in this movie is not an exception to her reputation as such. She plays a woman who does not contract the disease, therefore she still has her sight but she pretends like she doesn't in order to be able to stay with her afflicted husband. There were several large flaws with the movie (and the husband's character), but it was entertaining and thought-provoking; never a bore. Would I recommend it? Probably not to the average movie-watcher, but if you like disaster films, medical dramas, or if you just want to see what a large city would look like if it were abandoned by all that could see, leaving only thousands of blind people, then check it out. But I'm warning you, the view of the city isn't pretty, and at times, neither was the movie.