

Erin Vest: “A New Normal”
By Kevin Campbell

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01

While her husband drives them to the Rainbow Ridge horse ranch, Erin sits in the back seat with daughter Hala (now 9) and son Jack (now 11). “We’re always very happy when the entire family is together, “ Erin says.



02

Erin struggles to pull on her walking boots by herself as her husband gets the kids ready to ride. “Many of us who have gone through these disorders have gained weight from steroids,” Erin says. “Medical intervention saved my life, but it has definite side effects.”



03

Husband Aaron loads daughter Hala on her horse at Rainbow Ridge in Palmdale, CA. "Spending time as a family outside of a doctor's office, so the kids can see I am capable of some things, is always an amazing feeling," Erin says.



04

From the safety of the shade, Erin watches her daughter ride past. Erin sometimes rides with her, but that depends on Erin's disorders, not her. "My disorders ebb and flow," she says. "There are weekends my husband had to bring her because I can't even get out of bed."



05

Husband Aaron helps daughter Hala feed the turkeys. Erin protects herself from the sun with her favorite floppy hat. "Because of my Lupus, Fibromyalgia and other autoimmune disorders," Erin explains, "all my medications require me to stay out of direct sunlight."



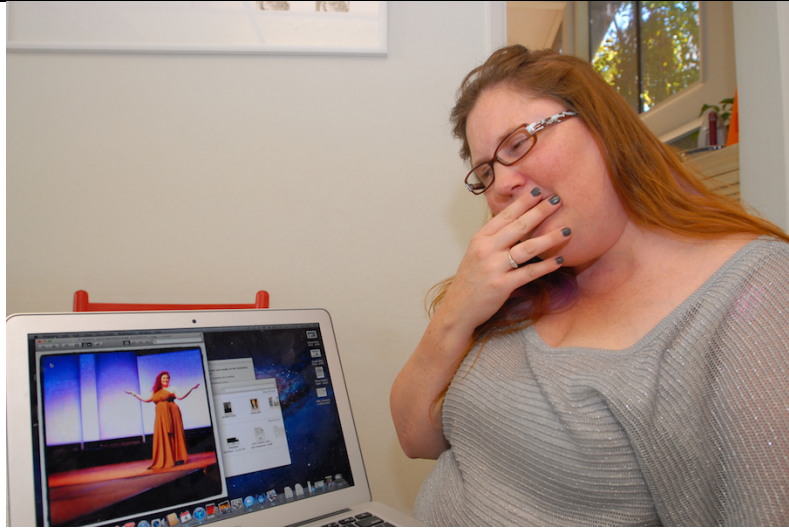
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Erin consults her batch of daily medications, both prescription and homeopathic. “There are two pages of meds each time I go to the doctor’s office,” Erin admits. “All my pain medications help me manage the day... and I take medications to combat the side effects of the OTHER medications.”



07

Erin goofs with son Jack after watching her daughter Hala ride. “He doesn’t mind if he’s not riding the horse like his sister,” Erin says. “He just likes to see his mom active and out in the world.”



Erin reacts after watching herself in an evening gown on the Katie Couric show. “When I saw myself, I didn’t see ME. That person isn’t me, it’s a steroid-bloated version of myself,” Erin reveals. “I have to be happy I am here, alive, and with my family.”



Erin, Hala and Jack watch her husband compete in the “Color Dash to End Stroke” 5k race near Irvine Lake. She suffered a stroke after undergoing multiple surgeries. “All of that was caused by Lupus,” Erin says, “and the pain never went away – which ended up being Fibromyalgia.”



10

Erin shows her husband his video of his finish line performance. “Unfortunately, I’m still battling,” Erin says. “But I’m getting lab works that indicate we’re on the right track. I have very high hopes that we can push this disorder far enough down to allow me to live a somewhat normal life – at least, a ‘new’ normal.”

You can keep up with Erin’s family adventures on her blog: <http://queenofspainblog.com>