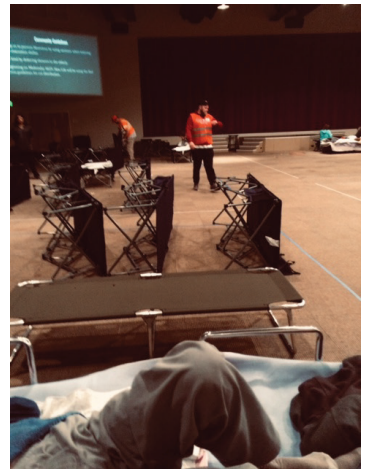
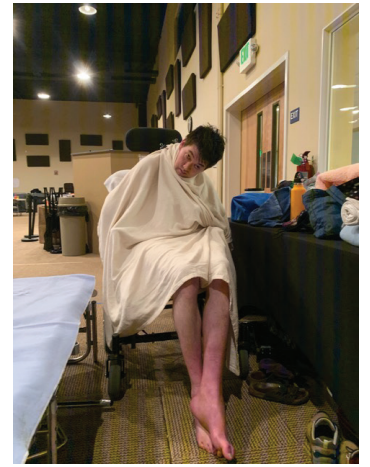


Dear Family and Friends of Mark Petchey,

Early Sunday morning on October 27 our sleep was interrupted by police cars on the street, with sirens and loudspeakers blasting, telling us of a mandatory evacuation order due to a huge fire burning to the east of us, near Santa Rosa. Ultimately this turned out to be the largest fire in Sonoma County history. That night the electricity company had already cut our power in order to avoid even more fires from starting. With a strong wind anticipated Pacific Gas and Electric wanted avoid turning any existing fire into a huge inferno. Much of California experienced power cuts for this reason, and hundreds of thousands of people throughout the region were under mandatory evacuation notice. Unfortunately, this scenario can now be expected each year during the Fall fire season here. Although new fires did still break out, in both northern and southern parts of the state, some due to PG&E's poorly maintained equipment, there were no deaths this time. In Sonoma County, where we live, firefighters were able to steer the largest fire away from towns. Although PG&E is being criticized for poor management in years past, this time its preventive measures did avoid a lot of panic, and most probably further disasters.

Mark and I evacuated for four nights to a very pleasant shelter in Petaluma, about twenty-five miles from home. While we were at the shelter I stayed in touch with other evacuated friends via Facebook. The shelter provided a comfortable cot for Mark, with coiled wire springs under the mattress covered with another thinner foam mattress. It is much more stable than other camping cots, and very suitable for Mark as a temporary bed when away from home. The shelter people unexpectedly gave us a cot just like it as we were leaving for home. We are storing it in Mark's van, so if we need to evacuate again in future, or if we go camping or visit friends overnight, he will have this easily assembled cot bed readily to hand, a big improvement to our lives!





*Mark is working on controlling his trunk. Here he is, rolling, on his own from the plinth to the floor, safely. To develop head and trunk control, Mark is relearning combat crawling. He needs help and cues right now. It's a lot of work - and he's doing it!*

We returned home after the power was restored on Thursday. After getting Mark re-settled at home, I packed again and departed for my annual Scottish Country Dance event at Asilomar, a well-known conference venue on the Pacific Ocean near Monterey, California. Fortunately another evacuated dancemate and I got a ride there from our teachers, so we could save our energy and recuperate without having to make the long drive ourselves. It was a very eventful week, and as I write this on the following Monday morning my brain still feels a bit scrambled. But dance is important to me as a way to recharge and connect with community, and despite the bad timing, coming so soon after the fire evacuation, I could not give the weekend up.

Hopefully the seasonal fire scare is over for the year. Soon the rainy season here may cause another problem. While we do not have tornados or hurricanes here we surely have fire and flood!