

Ruiz is thankful to be here

Written by Chris Lee

A year ago, he was in the hospital battling pneumonia and celebrating his 82nd birthday with family and hospital staff.

Last week, Jessie Ruiz spent time with his family celebrating his 83rd. “I’m here, thanks to God,” Ruiz said last week as he sat comfortably in his daughter’s home while his wife and another daughter prepared a cake and birthday meal. “I’m happy. I never thought I’d be here again with my family.”

Ruiz and his wife, Minnie, had driven their white Buick from Regent Park and Carriage House to spend time with their children. Daughter Estella said when Ruiz was moved into assisted living earlier this year, he told them they could sell everything except his white Buick—he loves it too much.



Jessie Ruiz is pictured with his wife Minnie on his 83rd birthday last week. Ruiz celebrated his 82nd birthday in the hospital a year ago—one which he and his family thought would be his last. ☐ ☐

—Enterprise photo

Last October, Ruiz was at Medical Center of the Rockies (MCR) in Loveland undergoing surgery on his stomach. Estella couldn't remember the exact term for the procedure, but explained Jessie's stomach had moved up into his chest area and had to be pulled down.

The surgery was performed by Dr. James Schiefen who practices in Holyoke every Thursday. Following the surgery, Ruiz was preparing to head back to Holyoke the next morning, but he went into shock.

Doctors found a small pencil-sized tear in his stomach and within an hour, he was back in surgery. Estella said Jessie was put on a respirator for about three days. He spent the next two weeks in the hospital before Estella and her husband Oscar traveled to transport him back to Holyoke.

"He was glad to be home," Estella said. Jessie was a swing bed patient at Melissa Memorial Hospital because he wasn't able to go home. It wasn't long before Jessie came down with his first bout of pneumonia.

One ambulance ride later, he was back at MCR. After another few weeks, he was moved back to Holyoke.

A feeding tube had to be inserted in Jessie's chest after he had complications with eating. It wasn't long before Jessie came down with another round of pneumonia. The kids huddled and decided to keep their father in Holyoke this time.

They learned that Jessie had to sleep with his head in an elevated position in order to keep the

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contents of his stomach from coming up. Ruiz ended up fighting two more rounds of pneumonia.

He was living at home and his children worked as a team each day to prepare the feeding tube and equipment. However, it became too much.

The decision was made to move Jessie into the nursing home. He was told by his doctors that everything they could do had been done. Estella said the doctors as well as the nursing staff did an outstanding job with her father during the rough period in his life.

“They just fell in love with dad,” Estella said of the nurses in Holyoke. “We’re very fortunate to have such a facility in Holyoke.”

The move to Regent Park/Carriage House came just two weeks after his wife had moved there. The hopes were Jessie could move in with Minnie on the assisted living side after he got better. And that is exactly what happened.

The duo, married 56 years, now spends their time working with the staff during physical therapy and celebrating the fact that Jessie is still around. Ruiz weakened during his time in the hospitals and is working to regain some of his strength.

“We couldn’t ask for any better care,” Estella said of Regent Park. “They bend over backwards trying to help my dad.”

Jessie and Minnie have made some good friends in the latest chapter of their life. Estella said their door is always open to visitors.

Jessie gathered with his family last week to enjoy another birthday. Jessie and Minnie have six children. Three live in Holyoke (Estella, Yolanda and Jessie) while three reside in Texas (Sandy, Isabel and Joe). Daughter Isabel made the trek last week to be with her parents and

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siblings.

The Ruiz family moved to Holyoke in 1969 from Hereford, Texas. Jessie worked with local farmers. Following his retirement, he kept busy riding his lawn mower around town, mowing lawns for people. He also enjoys detailing vehicles. Older vehicles really tickle his fancy.

Holyoke Enterprise October 25, 2012