

# FACES OF VALLEY FEVER



## A BROTHER, A DOG, AND THE BATTLE AGAINST VALLEY FEVER BY ANGELA FRANTZ

For my family, Valley Fever wasn't just a diagnosis — it was a decades-long battle.

My brother Fred was diagnosed with disseminated Valley Fever in 1993 during his senior year of high school, after doctors ruled out multiple other illnesses. The disease eventually led to meningitis and Addison's disease. His treatments were grueling, including powerful antifungals and lifelong medication.

Despite this, Fred lived fully — working, studying, singing in choirs, going on mission trips, and performing in local theater. He was diagnosed with kidney cancer in 2021 and beat it, but the toll of nearly 30 years of illness was too much. Fred passed away in December 2022.

We thought that chapter had closed — until Valley Fever struck again, this time in our rescue dog, Cooper.

Adopted in 2022, Cooper was a sweet pit bull mix. Months after settling in, he began showing subtle signs of illness — neck pain, eye issues, and weight loss. A year later, with no answers, a Valley Fever test came back shockingly positive. The disease had spread.

He never coughed or slowed down — which made the diagnosis harder. Despite high doses of medication, his condition worsened. We were faced with impossible treatment options and eventually made the painful choice to let him go.

Fred and Cooper shared a rare, invisible fight. Valley Fever doesn't always look the same — and it doesn't only affect people.

Their stories remind us: advocate for yourself, and for those who can't speak — even your pets. Question, listen, and never stop seeking answers.

Fred fought for 29 years. Cooper, for nearly one. Both taught us resilience.