



## FUN AND GAMES in the hospital

By Bill Boyer

**A**t four score years, I haven't had a lot of experience with hospitals. My first recollection of such was my granddad getting me up early one morning at their home in Pawnee, Neb., and walking me the half block to his hospital—where he had me count down from 100 so he could remove my tonsils. I also remember getting ice cream . . . and this was before my folks woke up to greet the day.

He also was consulted when I smashed my nose by jumping off a porch with a handkerchief parachute; and the resultant reaming out with a glass rod—that had somewhat of a deadening effect on my senses of taste and smell. (It took a sharp-eyed drill instructor in Marine bootcamp later to ascertain that my head was on crooked; and subsequent discovery that I had also broken a collarbone at some point, that apparently healed while overlapped).

About a dozen years on down the road I got a bad gut-ache, and was in the student hospital at K-State (which was on lockdown due to some kind of epidemic). My buddy, Jerry came in through the window, took a look at me and called my folks, and in less than half an hour I was on an operating table at the Manhattan hospital. I was told that the appendectomy incision was maybe going to be an inch in length—and the six-inch emergency cut finished my football career, as a could barely walk, much less return to practice.

Then it was a decade or so later before I made a visit to our local hospital—an overnight stay after tearing off a finger in a printing press. The pain

pills I was taking when we went to Colorado the following day on an office fishing/camping trip—mixed with beer—convinced me that drugs and alcohol are a bad combination, when I (according to fellow workers) had quite a lengthy conversation with a large white rabbit reminiscent of Harvey, that was perched on my knee.

So I really wasn't prepared when another 50 years passed by . . . and I ended up in the local emergency room, after slipping on ice while on my newspaper route (fortunately within crawling distance to a customer's door, with Madeline Murphy calling 911). A trip to Garden City by ambulance was climaxed with a pin placed in my hip—and 11 days in hospital and swing bed care.

This was when the fun and games began.

I vaguely recall one incident of projectile vomiting, which was messily strewn around the bed—but still sharp in my mind are the exercises that were forced on me (or rather my right leg) while lying in bed. All the personnel, incidentally, were great (though it seemed odd to be introduced to different nurses and aides each day). A lot of friends stopped by; and I probably should have been embarrassed to greet them wearing nothing but boxer shorts, but my head probably wasn't working well at the time, either.

I finally graduated to a walker (this was after removal of the catheter), but it seemed easier to utilize the bottle provided for urinary relief, than make the shuffling trip each time to the facility. One time I misjudged, however, and forgot to lower the foot of the bed—resulting in discovery of a small lake between my legs, due to the precarious tilt of the receptacle. Thankfully, a full box of tissues and nearby wastebasket came in handy, before the nurse call button was pushed.

My daughters in Garden City and Holcomb (Dianne and Suzann) were on hand, and another daughter and my son (Heather and Sean) were in Scott City, so I had family as callers (and to bring me things I required, including a robe and slippers from Suzie)—and I also received a surprise visit from my younger daughter (Megan), who came in from Oregon. And then I had a welcome—but saddening—visit from

Wilma Greer and sons, who bore the news that their husband/father, my dear friend, Bob had just died. Bob Greer was an inspiration to many an aspiring journalist, and missing his funeral was my one regret from this entire experience.

After transferring to the swing bed program in my hometown I was subjected to more exercises of excruciating movement; and again got fine care from all the staff. The 'games' part came primarily from indulging in word search sheet puzzles provided daily, which were more entertaining than any one program among 30 or so channels on the television.

I didn't have much of an appetite, though, and lost 10 pounds overall and an inch and a half in height (at least, from the last time I was measured for either).

I had forgone pain pills some time before, as my hip itself never really hurt (thanks to what I consider superb work by my surgeon); and upon release (and neglecting further rehab), depended on the walker for maybe a week and a half before casting it aside--and winning the argument posited by my kids that I should have either: a) a caretaker; or b) at least a cane, if not crutches.

I consider myself very fortunate, when so many others are having to cope with far more serious injuries, diseases and conditions. I have a friend a quarter of a century younger who recently underwent cardiac arrest, and spent a month in a coma. It seems almost miraculous when treatments can deliver recovery from such trauma, and we are truly blessed with the advances made in the medical field. Now if we could just wean ourselves from the prescriptions that end up being detrimental to our health, life would be even more enjoyable.

In my case, blood thinner and subsequent check-ups soon were in the past; so other than still trying to walk normally and working on balance; and, yes, temporarily reassuming a newspaper route . . . I have had--for my own peace of mind--to revise my previous plans to get my inline skates out of mothballs. 🚗



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