

## **A Two Book Hospital Stay**

On a Saturday morning, after a strenuous exercise session, I started to experience crushing chest pains. It felt like I had a heavy weight on my chest and the pain was about an “8” on a ten point pain scale. I told Ruth right away, then chewed up two baby aspirin and laid down on the bed. I knew what was happening and I knew it wasn’t good. The first crazy thing that went through my mind was, “Is this the way it all ends?” I realized that was such a negative thought and was determined to be more positive. Ruth asked if she should call the squad and I said, “Probably, but let’s wait a minute...maybe we should call Dr. Mayuga, your cardiologist.” The pain started to subside after about three or four minutes, but we both knew I needed to be seen by experts. Ruth took my pulse and heart rate and everything seemed normal. After the pain had subsided, I put on some “going to the hospital clothes” and immediately started experiencing pain in my chest again. The pain was less intense but similar to the earlier pain. We headed for the car and Ruth drove me to the emergency room. We were driving very fast (Ruth drives so much faster than me normally...but faster in this situation). I also noticed that her automobile radio station was playing country music. I said, “Honey, If I’m gonna die, I don’t want to do it in an auto crash or while listening to that country music!” We both laughed and she turned the radio off.

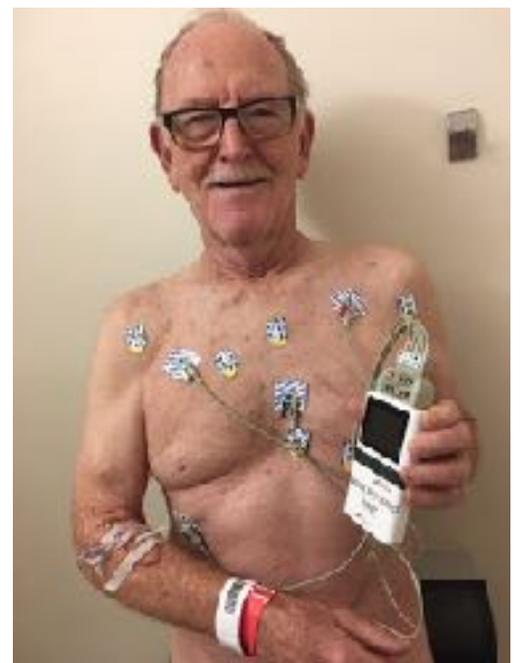
The trip to the hospital is normally only twenty minutes and Ruth made it is fifteen! After my first date with Ruth in 1952, my father said, “That Ruth Weaver is a fine young woman...but she drives too fast!” He was right, but in this case her NASCAR tendencies paid off.

When we arrived at University Hospital-Portage Medical Center Emergency Department, Ruth grabbed a wheelchair (she didn’t engage the wheelchair brakes as she should have...something I

mentally noted for a later conversation, as we were instructed to do that each time in my transporter job at the same hospital on Friday afternoons. In fact, I had just done 9,000 steps the previous day and had experienced no problems.) I was taken to a private bay and immediately hooked up to an EKG machine and had a IV line inserted. Initial tests showed that I had not had a heart attack but more blood tests needed to be analyzed before a final diagnosis could be determined. After the two painful episodes, I had not, and have not, experienced any more pain in my chest...a good sign that my problem might be resolved. After a flurry of activity in ER, the pace slowed down and I was admitted for observation and moved to the Step Down Unit (2West).

The Step Down Unit was nearly full and so I was put in Room 30 with another patient...a very sick ninety year old man who was suffering from heart failure and could not clear his lungs... causing him to cough for five seconds every fifteen seconds! He could barely speak and seemed very disoriented. I spent the remainder of the day getting many EKGs and having my blood drawn numerous times. Note: Do not get sick on a Saturday or Sunday as hospital activity slows and one must wait til Monday to receive more intense procedures.

Sunday afternoon, the cardiologist informed me that tests indicated that I probably had blockages which needed to be repaired with stents, or if more serious, I would have to be transferred to UH Ahuja Medical Center for bypass surgery. It entered my mind that installing stents would require reduced activity for a week or so, but bypass surgery would mean no golf or heavy yard work for months. Being positive, I thought that if a bypass might be in my future, I would work more on our flower beds, write more stories for my web



site and finish reading the Classics (as I have already read one or two). One strange thing did happen on Saturday worth mentioning. I noticed that my roommate had left his toothpaste in the bathroom and so I put some on my finger and rubbed it on my teeth. It felt very funny...sticky. I looked at the tube and discovered that I had filled my mouth with Polident Denture Cleaner!!! It felt like I had put glue on the back of my teeth and it took several hours of repeated gargling with mouth wash to dislodge the "glue." If you ever have nothing to do on a Saturday afternoon, try this as it is a new experience!

Saturday night was a tough one...as my roommate coughed all night, and along with heart monitors going off in nearby rooms, I got little sleep. My first text in the morning was to Ruth requesting that she bring in the noise cancelling ear protectors I use when blowing leaves. (She did and they worked but they weren't required as my roommate was transferred to another room Sunday morning.)



My Sunday highlight was a visit from Harold Alan...who went crazy when he saw me and immediately snuggled between my legs and went to sleep. The rest of the day was mostly tests and waiting.

Monday morning, I was awakened at 1:00, 3:00 and 5:00 for blood draws and the ever popular tummy shot to reduce the possibility of blood clots. Kelly, Tanya, Kaitlyn, Janine, Nancy, Morgan and Brianna were so caring and were always there when I needed something. I was closest to Kelly as she was there during most of my waking hours. I could not have asked for better nurses or support staff.

The appointed hour came for the heart catheterization (I was bumped up from 2:00 to noon) and I was wheeled down to the Cath lab. There I was met by three rowdy guys and a very nice woman... all of whom had lots of comments on my tattoo which was quite visible in my current undressed state. They asked how long I had had it and when I told the "since I was 81," they really cracked up. One fellow said, "Are you really 82?" An intended compliment...but followed that by asking how long I had been retired...and when I said twenty-two years... he said he was in the second grade when I retired.

This catheterization and stent procedure was not new to me as I had had a stent put in in 1997, one year after my retirement, and it has functioned perfectly since that time. I say "it" but really should say "they" as several days after the stent was inserted, I suffered more chest pains and they needed to enlarge the stent to insure proper blood flow. A colleague in the College of Medicine asked if he might ask one of our former students, now a heart expert, if he would my review my case. I said yes and after he reviewed my case, he called me to say that I would probably have to have several bypasses within six months. That event did not materialize, but for several years I worried that might be a possibility, until my local cardiologist assured me that the stents were working perfectly and to stop worrying.

Dr. Guptka came into the Cath Lab, reviewed what he would be doing and asked if I had any questions. I had none, so they injected Fentanyl and Versed (midazolam) and the procedure commenced a few minutes later. Dr. Gupta inserted a catheter into my right wrist and entered my heart arteries. He spoke to the technicians but I was unable to hear what he said. There was no pain except in my back where I have a minor bulging disc. Dr. Gupta told me that the LAD Artery (Lateral Artery Descending... aka, "Widow Maker") and the Diagonal Artery were 90% blocked. He said one there was additional artery with minor blockage but would be treated with medication. He left and Ruth and I never

saw him again. He sent another cardiologist later to explain what had happened.



I was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), which is the normal procedure for a person receiving a stent. This unit is where our daughter, Jill, normally works as a nurse (but is on Leave of Absence while serving as a Travel Nurse in New Hampshire). The nurses all knew Jill and was up-to-date on how she was doing. I was monitored

with all kinds of equipment and had regular checks of my vital signs...and, I even got several more of my favorite Tummy Shots. The nurses and staff were wonderful...I spent most of my time with Christina, Kellee and Heather...all very caring and attentive. The hospital Hospitalist was a regular visitor and kept us up-to-date on the progress of my stay (Man does he have a great smelling after shave...I want some of that! I checked and it was Adidas After Shave!). Amy, the Echocardiogram technician and Stacey, the Pharmacy Supervisor were also very helpful and informative. The Manager of the cafeteria, Dan, came to take my meal orders, as our friend Shawn (Director of the UH-Portage Foundation) had listed me as a VIP! Around noon on Monday, I was discharged and was told I could walk to our car...This was a minor disappointment as I was hoping a Transporter might be taking me to our car! By 12:30, I was home and being greeted by Harold Alan. I settled into my easy chair...Harold Alan squeezed in beside me and we took a nap.

Having a heart issue, no matter how small, gets one's attention. I have always tried to exercise, eat healthy food, not drink alcoholic beverages and be positive...but nothing guarantees a life without issues. Ruth and I are grateful this episode appears to

have a happy ending and will continue to live altruistic lives... much of that goal because of what we learned fifty-seven years ago who our son, Jay, didn't breath for a while at birth and thirty-eight years ago when we lost our son, Jon. The good life is not about money or position but about living loving lives...focusing more about others than ourselves...fighting the good battle... understanding that there is a power greater than ourselves. It is called Post Traumatic Growth...don't let anything get you down. Our family, Jeff/Sally, Jay, Jill, Dan, Andrew, Austin and niece Judy kept visiting and calling during this recent episode as did our many friends. Ruth has always been there of me, and she was this time. I will never be able to repay her for all she has done for our family and friends...and me. She is a lofty role model and I am a better person for having been in love with her for sixty-five years.

And the title of this piece...**A Two Book Hospital Stay?** That is



the amount of reading Ruth achieved while waiting for me at the hospital! We each have a work ethic that requires us to “get things done.” Thus, I wrote this story the day after I returned home.

July 4, 2018