

Suddenly Surgery: Rectumpence Reigns

I had a fun weekend planned until my visit to the doctor about some piles I was suffering changed the whole picture. Doctor Nyrandi, a bright and perceptive diagnostician here at Wahpeton Sanford, put his finger on a real problem: my malady needed immediate attention. That was at 1:00 p.m. on a Friday. But he had some good news: his friends at Sanford could likely get me in for surgery that very afternoon. And so it came to pass that before 7 that evening, those piles had been removed, and as it turned out, I was about to spend the longest night of my life, enduring post-operative recovery.

I imagined that would go just like a couple of previous surgeries I'd had, where I'd awakened into a peaceful drowse and gradually, after 7 hrs. of deep sleep, had some sweet attentive nurse walk me about the ward to avoid complications.

That was 30 years ago for a gastrectomy; but things have changed a bit, as I was soon to find out for this much less-invasive procedure. I awoke just a couple hours after the procedure, and would soon discover what it's like to spend post op awake, but fighting to get back to sleep.

Several small issues stood between me and healing slumber: First, the bed I was given had to have been designed by a cunning sadist: The mattress was striated with ridges and bumps seemingly positioned for my discomfort.

Apnea allows me to sleep only on my left side, but I found that that side was the one where steel bars and the tilt of the bed forbade my getting into my usual sleeping position. Furthermore the four cables running out both sides of the bed made every turn feel like I was about to tear something loose.

One of those tubes belonged to my catheter, which, maddeningly, brushed against the nerve that usually gave me the *inkle* to tinkle. This night that inkling

stayed with me several hours-keeping me constantly thinking I had to go, which I didn't! That inkling is nature's wake up call, not a sedative.

Also I had the weird sense that somewhere under the two or three thick, stiff white coverings, (whether they were sheets or blankets, God only knows), cold air was leaking in on me, a guy with an odd response to drafts. At home, drafts usually brought on sneezes, but there in the recovery room they only brought on fear of the pain a sneeze might bring to my delicate condition. A few years back a big sneeze gave me a hernia needing surgery.

Perhaps the torment most successful in keeping me awake was the sudden need for my nasal spray-a twelve-hour *Afrin-like* generic. I had taken some earlier in the day, and right on time it was wearing off, causing me to breathe through my mouth. In no time my mouth felt drier than the delta of some African desert wadi.

At moments when sheer exhaustion was about to let me sleep, in would pop a cheery nurse to check my wounds for bleeding. I did tell one I needed nasal spray, and two hours later, (the pharmacy had been closed), it got to me, but it was salt water, not Afrin. I quickly found that when both nostrils are completely plugged, salt water spray is useless. It's normally used to get people off the kind I needed -- the quick-working variety.

At about 7 a.m. another nice nurse came by and kindly asked how I slept. "Not at all," I snapped, and that was the truth. I think that bed was designed by a Swami bent on doing penance for bad karma, Me, it just kept awake.

In my waking "midnight hours," I reminded myself that many others might also be suffering sleeplessness, like the homeless and those poor souls over in Ukraine, and then it hit me: the misery, torment, and sheer agonizing horror suffered by those thousands of innocent Jewish victims, jammed together in those stinking,

windowless box cars carrying them to a fate no civilized person could have even imagined.

If you don't believe in devils, think again. The ovens, the gulags and the emergence of sadists like Putin, are proof of the horrors demon-directed monsters can inflict on fellow human beings.

The next day, they said I could go home as soon as I tinkled. It took until six, but with the help of the Good Lord, we were home before dark.

I'm writing this on the sixth day of my recovery. And am just today getting so I can sit down without pain. But I feel blessed: the worst is behind and the whole ordeal happened on days I would have spent inside. Spring is stirring and the Red will soon be running free-as will I.

Gene Pinkney for The Daily News 23-03-0-11-