

Spring 2014

Silent Awhile

I've been silent for a while, because I've been sick. Being sick is a strange feeling for me, for I didn't feel I was sick for the five years while undergoing twelve surgeries. I would just get operated on, and recuperate for about thirty days, and be back in the gym and the golf course. The one exception was when I had three rounds of IL 2 chemo. I thought I was going to die each time. But even then, after each treatment, I was back to normal in a few days.

My number twelve surgery was January 15. The neurosurgeon took the melanoma cells off my brain that he had left alone two years before. The reason he didn't disturb them two years before was because it was thought that I had, at best several months to live. He knew I would have to learn to talk again, and I might be physically crippled. It was a quality of life issue. I might as well have the time I had left without the bother of not being able to talk. Well, I beat the odds, and had a great – with the exception of the IL 2 treatments – two years.

I'm a fan of SEC football, and I was watching Alabama embarrass the SEC in the Sugar Bowl. I started to make a remark critical of Coach Saban, and I couldn't speak. I knew what I wanted to say, but I couldn't form the words. It only lasted about two minutes, but it happened several times in the next week. Now there was no downside in taking the cells off my brain. The surgeon told me that I would have to learn to talk again, but with speech therapy it shouldn't take too long. The surgery went well. I spent one night in the ICU, and one night in the hospital. I couldn't utter a word, and I couldn't spell, but there were no more ill effects.

My speech started coming back in several days, and I felt great for two and a half weeks. My first speech therapy session was on February 3, and I felt awful, but I made it through the session, and went to an appointment with my oncologist. They took my vitals and rushed me to the ER. I was admitted to the hospital suffering a-fib. They got me squared away in three days, and I was discharged. I stayed home two days and then I wound up arriving at the ER in style in an ambulance. My heart was out of rhythm again, but it was also discovered that my head had sprung a leak from my previous surgery. My heart was in rhythm in a couple of days – it still is – but I had a drain placed in the area where my brain is supposed to be, and it took nine days for the docs to decide that I had quit leaking, and the fluid was not spinal fluid.

I was home a week before it started leaking again, and I was hospitalized once again. This time, the plastic surgeon took me back to surgery for number thirteen to repair my flap, so I wouldn't keep leaking. It seems to have been successful, but I picked up a staph infection, and I am at home in Atlanta – second home – attached to an IV twice a day. I am told that the staph I have is the most common and easy to cure. Nevertheless, I will probably be married to the IV for about four more weeks.

Thanks for all your good wishes in response to my daughter's email. Your responses came to me, but I didn't feel well enough to send emails for a while. We get out every day now, lunch, grocery shopping, etc. I am getting stronger daily, and I think my speech is about 90% now.