

Lapsus Calami

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A Bionic Man

Over a decade ago, old friend Vic Moitoret confided to me the relief he felt after a bilateral hip replacement operation. "It is a joy to be able to lie in bed and not have my hips ache so badly that I could not sleep!" I could not appreciate the immensity of the implications of his confession at that time, but was impressed with the intensity of his testimonial. I had not yet suffered from arthritic pains, though I realized that I had a family history of skeletal problems. I was still jogging regularly for exercise, believing the "experts" who regularly told me that running was good for me. Well, they lied. I eventually wore out all of the cartilage in my knees and was reduced to hobbling around on a cane full time. My knees only hurt me when I was standing or walking, so I essentially became sessile, spending most of my waking hours seated. It soon became evident that I had to have knee replacement operations if I wanted to lead anything resembling a normal life.

My family physician, a former student, referred me to a Dr. Jeff Parr, in Lexington, whom he considered to have the best reputation for his skills as an orthopedist in the Bluegrass region of Kentucky. He examined me and agreed to do the surgery, scheduling my first operation the last of October, 2005, and the second knee for the last of January, 2006. I must confess that part of my motivation was due to fear – fear that George W. Bush would bankrupt Medicare in his war in Iraq before my surgeries were complete.

I must tell you that knee replacement surgery is not for the faint hearted. I had

looked at internet virtual surgery photos and understood what was involved. The first knee replacement went amazingly well – much pain, though marginally controlled by drugs – two days on a walker, two days on a cane, and I was able to walk unaided in less than a week. A Physical Therapist came to my home three times a week to supervise special, simple exercises for the legs. I was elated and looked forward to the second operation.

It, however, was a different experience – much more pain and discomfort, over a week on a walker, about two weeks on a cane, and extremely slow recovery. Fortunately we cannot remember pain, and during a few months, made a steady recovery. For the first time in years, there is no pain in the knees at all, and I can again walk up and down stairs *normally*, and didn't have to creep up or down a step at a time, holding on to hand rails. When I walk, I find it difficult to remember what a painful experience I endured before the surgery. I truly feel born-again, with a new lease on life. I highly recommend the procedure, if you are a candidate. Everyone I know who has new knees feels this way. I now set off alarms in airports, and sport high-tech titanium prostheses, making me a Kentucky bionic man.

Y

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