
Life Lessons Learned Along the Way: Bon Voyage Post Script

By Harvey R. Heller

I have used this space to tell stories about who I am and to introduce you to our group. My stories aren't about me, but about people and events that have had a profound impact on me.

So, when I last wrote for this piece, I related how my wife Ronna broke her leg and our life turned upside down. She ended up spending 11 weeks out of the house between the hospital and a rehabilitation facility, both of which provided great care. We cancelled a trip to South America and missed three grandchildren's birthday celebrations out of state.

One of our routine habits while she was rehabbing was to take her out on weekend afternoons. Lunch, maybe a movie, or a hair appointment, etc. So, on week 10, I picked her up as usual. We own a specially equipped van with a ramp, so it was easy to get around. On this particular day, my better half decided she didn't want to use the ramp, but rather chose to get out of the wheelchair and step into the front seat of our van unassisted.

A discussion ensued and, as is usual, I did not prevail in my view that she should use the chair and ramp. Ronna took one step and started to fall. It was near or below zero outside and of course she had the added challenge of a 12" plate down her right thigh strapped multiple times around her femur per the X-ray I had seen. So, in an act of gallantry worthy of a Sir Walter Raleigh, or maybe even a Superman accolade, I caught her mid-fall, eased her to the ground until help arrived and...tore my left rotator cuff! Surgery was March 1st.

Pre-incident, I was swimming 12-14 miles a week. I was out of the pool for five months post-surgery and was told that recovery from rotator cuff surgery would take four to six months and up to a year (and would be painful). For the first few days after surgery, I thought the surgeon, a friend, was kidding. Then the nerve block wore off! I slept sitting up in a chair wearing an immobilizing sling (think metal) for six weeks, which means I hardly slept. I had a therapy chair for use at

home that raised my arm up for two hours each day and an icing device to cool down the inflammation for another two hours a day. I managed to take only five days off of work, but frankly, I should have taken a few more (binge-watching “Law and Order SVU” on Hulu can be habit forming!). Painkillers were helpful for a couple of weeks, but I decided that living with the pain was the better way to go for a host of reasons.

For the last 20 weeks, I have been attending physical rehab twice a week and starting each day with an hour of steadily increased intensity of stretching, range of motion and muscle-rebuilding therapy at home. I slept with my arm elevated, but recently got back to my normal fetal position. Gradually, I started taking spinning classes, using an elliptical and biking on weekends. Swimming has recently been approved, and I am lucky in that my fellow 4 a.m. swimmers saved my lane (yes, even at that pre-dawn hour, it gets crowded!).

Our youngest grandchild was recently here for a weekend and I was thankfully able to lift him. Our two eldest grandchildren will be here as you read this, and I have reserved our usual aerial obstacle course with zip lining and other outdoor activities. And, assuming there are no other issues, the trip to South America has morphed into a cruise to China, Korea and Japan in October.

While some might say that my lesson should be the next time, as Mel Brooks said in “Blazing Saddles,” “Luzzem Gayen,” (“Let her go” in Yiddish), I’m not made that way. Mutual support has helped Ronna, and soon myself to fully recover. And speaking of support, as well as leadership and talent, our Defense Practice and Insurance Coverage Group handled all that was thrust upon them with their usual skill and expertise. The future of this well-oiled machine is bright!

And now, on a tortuously related topic, my partner David Saperstein is next up this month with an [article about collateral estoppel](#)!