

I Crashed into a Pier 43 Years Ago



Forty-three years ago this summer, August 22, 1973, I water skied into a pier. I was on a slalom ski so I only broke my left leg. It was in front. The other good news was I hit a wooden brace, (which broke in two when my leg hit it), instead of hitting a piling which would have flat-lined me. I knew I had just made a major boo boo. Up until that moment, I had been fearless. I thought I was invincible. Stupid to admit but true.

Why in the world would I be dumb enough to ski into a pier? Well, in high school I worked in an office at an insurance agency. The office decided to have a party at the owner's camp house in honor of me leaving to go to college. The camp house had a small pond with a ski boat. In typical style for me in those days, I immediately wanted to get on skis and show off. The pond was so small that the boat could only make a circle. I liked to go fast so I would wait until the boat was in the curve before I shot out to get more speed from the ventricular force. Only problem was when I skied out, there was the pier and WHAM. That was the end of the party and began a long ordeal.

As a recalcitrant teenager, my goal was to get away from home and my mother as soon as possible. Crashing into the pier made all of that impossible. I was going to be in the hospital for a month and totally dependent on my mother. (As a side note, the cost of being in the hospital for a month in 1973 was a whopping \$3500. I still have the bill). While in the hospital I got a pain shot every 4 hours. No pain pumps in those days. Before the crash I had been deadly afraid of shots and needles. No more. I would call the nurses and tell them it wasn't quite four hours yet, but to get that pain shot ready! I wanted the pain shot the minute the 4 hours was up.



I finally did go to college but with a handicap sticker and with my leg in a brace. The brace had an ugly brown shoe attached and had hinges at the knee that I had to lock in place. (I know that ugly brown shoe is the reason I later became a shoe queen). I also learned that scotch works as well as pain pills but I digress.



I had an interesting experience when I had another surgery on my leg in 1974. By this time my tolerance to pain pills was at an all-time high. On the stretcher waiting to be taken into the surgical suite at Methodist Hospital, the nurse gave me medicine that was supposed to knock me out. Because of my high tolerance for pain medication, I was still wide awake. The attendant wheeled me into the surgical suite which was a large room with individual operating rooms. Each operating room had a door with a glass window. On the wall was a big blackboard that had the operating room number and the patients that were scheduled for that room. There were no computers in those days. The attendant parked my stretcher outside the operating suite that I was scheduled to go into once the surgery on the patient in front of me was finished. The attendant thinking I was out, left the scene. So, being wide wake I sat up and watched what was happening in the operating room. I saw a women having back surgery and when they finished they rolled her off the table onto the stretcher. It seemed to me they pushed her off rather than gently moving her.

Here comes the doctor and his surgical team. The doctor pushed open the door with his forearms, holding his gloved hands up in the air. I was sitting on the stretcher with my finger pointing right at him and said, "I saw what you did! You pushed her off the operating table." As you might expect this did not go over well and the doctor, Dr. George Lane, called for the anesthesiologist to immediately come over and knock me out. Before he did that, he called over another doctor and said, "Did you hear the latest Aggie joke? Did you hear about the Aggie that skied into a pier? Well, here she is!" Before I could respond, the anesthesia kicked in and I was out. ***It was a different world in those days.***

When I would feel sorry for myself because I was on crutches, my mother would say, "Think about the people that have no feet." As a teenager, this adage only made me mad. I didn't care about the people with no feet. I just wanted my leg to work, and ultimately it did.

My crash into the pier changed my life. As devastating as it was, it gave me a different view of the world. It made me wilder and crazier. It made me relate better to all types of people. It made me realize I wasn't special. It made me realize I was just a plain ole human being. And in the end, that is just fine.

