

This is Such a Pain

Jim Scott

I have been thinking about pain lately. Not the kind after taco Tuesday, or whiskey Wednesday. This is more like when something just snaps inside....inside my arm, as is the present case. I don't even have a good story to go with it and it wouldn't belong in this publication, except that it went snap while I was working on a motorcycle.

I recall an article written by the great wordsmith Jack Lewis in Motorcyclist Magazine a while back where he literally did a tour of the country while recalling injuries sustained in his travels. My lists of encounters with the medical repair people is much less interesting, although the truth about a few of them do illicit the shaking of heads and that "you idiot" look from the listeners. I have a right knee replaced after numerous attempts to repair my own parts, which ended in further breakdowns. I have a shoulder that is replaced after five years of suffering from a tripping incident over buried fence wire in the Great North woods. Fortunately, I didn't spill the bait, or the can of beer, but I did wreck the shoulder socket. By the time I had it fixed, I had consumed a lot more beer (pain, you know), and I had cut half way through the bicep muscle. Then there is the ACL repair on the other knee, but they told me jumping up to the dock and blowing it out was probably heredity kicking in. Oh, I feel a lot better about it now. There's more, but enough about me.

In their book, In His Image, Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancy discuss the issue of pain from the point of view of one who suffers from leprosy. The wounds that result from leprosy erupt from the lack of pain sensors. Shoes that are too tight cause deformation of feet, and the loss of them. Burns are not felt, which might seem OK when you touch a hot piece of metal, or have your nose to close to the reefer, but it's hard to pick said facial orifice with a charred finger. The conclusion is that pain can be our friend. It warns us something is wrong. It indicates the need to stop, or at least, slow down and let things mend.

I like to think I have a high threshold for pain. Lord knows I have inflicted numerous doses throughout the years with work, life style, debauchery, and assorted cases of bad judgment. I have not always listened really well to the voices of pain, and have been lucky to have escaped the consequences more than a few times. I like to think I heal well, even though I have less to work with each year that goes by. I really try hard not to advertise my hurt, to which I am roundly criticized by the few who care. Which brings me to another side of pain.

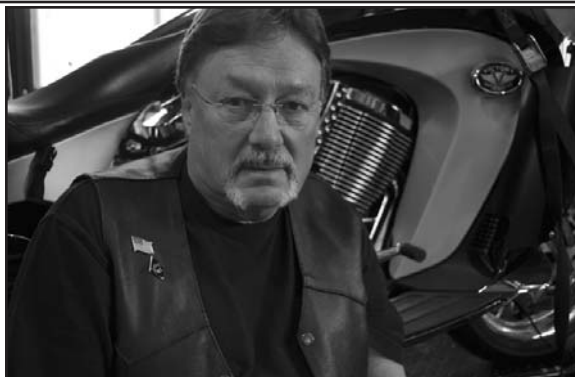
I will admit, it is not a trait I am proud of, but there are people who I do not ask, "How are you?" They start and never quit. They have a litany of medical maladies as long as the Danube, and they know 63 people who have similar problems, except....bla, bla, bla.

Years ago I lost a friend who was smart, strong, fun, and full of life and life stories. He got struck down with a post-operative stroke. I would take his dogs to see him at the hospital grounds. When he got home, I would go over to his house to get my ass whipped in a game of chess. He couldn't talk very well, but he would let you know that he was not going to share the Christmas caramel corn my wife would make for him. And he never complained. He finally passed from us, but the stories at his wake had tears of laughter rolling down our cheeks. Every time I think I am having a bad day, I know Burley would trade places with me gladly.

So that sort of brings me back around to the pain in my arm. It hurt, but not enough to stifle my plans and those included a charity ride for friends of mine who have a ton of medical bills after a successful fight with throat cancer. We had planned the ride some time ago and decided that Father's Day was appropriate because Mike is one, and his daughter helped to organize a lot of what went on after the ride.

Those of us who supported Mike in his fight saw a strong man taken to near death, but he battled on. A lot of tears and hugs were shared. His employer was supportive, but insurance does not cover all things. He lost a lot of weight, strength, smell, and taste. But he didn't lose his wife Sherry. Her laugh is infectious, so when she cries, your heart aches too. She cried away from Mike. He sent her away to be with us so she could. And like Burley, he never complained. He was the model patient and got the nurses to laugh in the middle of poisoning his disease. He called me when he was declared "cancer free". I was as happy to hear about him as I was when they told me the same thing. He said he wanted to be on the ride and he made it....all 225 miles of it.

When we got back to the bar where it all started, I was pulling my cycle into a parking spot when something else went snap in the same arm. Now it really hurts, but I wasn't going to talk about me. If my summer ends on the first day of summer with a successful ride for a good cause, what do I have to complain about? We did something right. Burley would be happy to be me. My MRI is in 45 minutes. Hope I'm not late to find out summer is over. What a pain.... Surprise! Summer is not ended! Still have pain, but it is "age related" and I should be OK in a few weeks when the bicep heals and the tear in the rotator cuff quits being inflamed. Will someone please pass the Alieve.... I think I need the maps for Sturgis.



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