

Dear Jim,

5/9/81

Lil brought your letter of the 29th to the hospital. We both appreciate it. The phone call is a good idea but I'd prefer to hold back on it until there is a good probability that I won't be falling asleep while talking. I've been staying pretty tired and I've been falling asleep sitting up at early hours.

I don't have and haven't had pain, which is fortunate. This is the third time I've not needed either sleeping or pain pills. But the leg is more reluctant to function, feels a bit heavier, and does make complaints when I use it. Sometimes even when I don't. Right now it is much more awkward merely having it elevated, as I've done for more than five years.

This one was a close one. I don't recall what I knew when Lil wrote you and I didn't see her letter, so this encapsulation.

There was a further deterioration of the left thigh artery, this time at the point where it splits to feed three different lower arteries. It blocked all three and there thus was total blockage of any circulation ~~to~~ to the left leg and thigh. I believe that Dr. Hufnagle also told me there were some clots. One of his assistants, when I asked what happened to me, told me that I'd had a "profound systemic insult," and that it not uncommonly is fatal, causing the heart to stop. One of the paramedics who transported me told Lil that this is the medical description. (I do know that my blood pressure was higher than I'd ever heard and once Hufnagle mused that it had been "nip and tuck." One of the ~~ward~~ ward nurses was on emergency room duty that night and ~~she~~ she told me "you kept us running" and that once they got started they proceeded in greatest haste.

I was quite lucky that this time I could ~~and~~ did get an ambulance. Last year it took a day. At the least I'd have lost my left leg and thigh, probably more.

This ambulance crew was great. The driver also is a fan. They remained in the emergency room until I was carted off to surgery. I guess this was because like me in the past when I worked ambulances as a volunteer foreman, they knew that the patient sometimes gets lost in the emergency room.

Jim Lesar also went there and remained with me until the elevator stopped at the OR. The assistant surgeon told him he could not get off there. My recollections are sketchy, as though I were slipping in and put of consciousness. The clearest is my sudden realization that in the emergency room Dr. Hufnagle was standing over me, making his examination, and looking very worried. I was quite aware of his worried look but it nonetheless made me feel easier.

Once they got started they worked so fast they never got around to removing my undershorts. I remember doing that when I was in the ward.

When I thanked Hufnagle for rushing back to the hospital (it was about 2:30 a.m. when they finished with me in the OR) he said merely that he hadn't left the hospital. I'm told he had been in surgery, as usual, at 6 a.m., and returned there again at 6 a.m., which gave him remarkably little sleep. What a dedicated man!

The ward in which I was is the one to which I'd been sent after the previous emergency return. Most of the nurses remembered me. They were all very good, some even better than that, especially two of the younger ones.

I was very glad to get home after 18 more days in the hospital, even though I was quite relaxed there. They kidded me about my teenager's blood pressure, usually 120/60, with pulse usually 60; and they called me "Walker" because of my efforts to walk, ~~even~~ even with IVs in me and a container hanging from the catheter that permitted urination for the week or so the machinery would not function naturally. I walked so much that the nurses held a meeting and appointed one to tell me to ease off on it. I did, but I estimate that I'd walked about a mile that day, in the ward corridor. (Walking is of great importance because, as the assistant surgeon told me, the future will hinge on the

2

amount of ancillary circulation I can build up by making what remains of the minor vessels carry more.

The fresh full richness of the green of spring is so beautiful after so long a period away from it, particularly because green was only just emerging and hadn't reached the richness maturity with several good rains gave. While most of the early flowers are gone, a few tulips remain and the irises and others are coming out. The dogwoods are at maximum bloom and will be dropping the petals soon. Today I may even walk around and see if I can see more.

I got home afternoon of the day before yesterday. I had to go to the drug store for two medicines, I wanted to learn how much I can drive because on Monday I have the necessary blood test, so I drove there, not much more than 10 minutes away. I left the prescriptions and walked about a block into the shopping center, sitting and resting, and I walked back, making one purchase then got the medicine. Alas it was too much for me. Lil thinks that the ambulance trip home also tired me, although I'd not have suspected it. In any event, I was so tired I did not want to drive Lil to the China Pearl for supper, close as it is. And I dozed off looking at the evening TV news. So I took it easy yesterday, when I also was tired. I plan to do a bit more today and to increase activity gradually. I return to the hospital for the first checkup on the 18th.

No, I didn't recall that you had all those bay trees. I believe I was never at ~~your~~ your home in daylight and never there when more than half awake. I don't know if the still sleeping Lil said anything but she does use ~~them~~ bay leaves in cooking.

That was a fine experience with your young CPA with your taxes. Those kinds of experiences make us feel good.

Fortunately I'd found an apparent solid high school lad nearby before this newest setback. He mowed for the first time last week and for a boy did a good job. I did the first mowing with the riding mower. A local mechanic who treats me as a favorite made a gadget on which I can keep the left leg elevated. I'd also used the tractor to pull some carts of wood up to the house or the woods to the east of it. With the wheelchair to keep the left leg elevated I'd even chopped more than a cord of forewood from the branches I could reach of some culled trees. I'd begin to feel as though I'd be rebuilding some of ~~them~~ the lost capabilities. I'll be getting that good feeling again soon as I again start rebuilding, perhaps a little more slowly. I don't know if I overdid and you are not the first to give this caution, so I'll take it and take fewer chances, perhaps.

This early hour is such a beautiful part of the day, from my office window to the east. As the sun comes up through the ~~green~~ pines the birds find the feeders and give them a rough time. All kinds of beautiful birds. The smallest, like the chickadees, do not fear the feeders we have attached to the window glass.

Our best,

