

DIARY OF A MIRACLE

It was just two days until my final five week vacation from Eastman Kodak Cine Processing Laboratory, in Hollywood. I was working the late shift and arrived home at midnight. The house was quiet, as my wife had already retired for the night. I poured out a cup of coffee and made a sandwich. I went into the den to enjoy my snack and to watch a bit of the 'Late Show' on television. About one o'clock, I got up and went into the bedroom to get ready for bed. I removed my glasses and placed them on the dresser..... and woke up in a hospital room!

It was about two o'clock on Tuesday afternoon when I awoke and realized that I was in a strange room. I felt something on my chest and looked down to see an EKG transmitter attached to the electrodes on my chest. I assumed that I had had a severe heart attack. (I have had two minor ones previously) I felt as though nothing had happened to me that was too dangerous. After a while, two nurses ran into the room and checked the electrodes on my chest. Before I had much chance to question them, they left. about two thirty, My wife called and I asked her where I was. "In Northridge Hospital," she said. "What was the matter with me," I asked. She said that she would be right over and fill me in on the details, when she got there. We live only two miles from the hospital. What happened to me the night before, she told me about when she got to the hospital. It seems that she awoke to the sound of a dull thud at the foot of the bed and found me laying there in a stupor. She got me to my feet and then sat me on the side of the bed. I had on my pajamas, but they were soaked with perspiration. I told her that I didn't feel well and that I thought she should take me to the hospital. She called our family Doctor and he said that she should get me to the hospital immediately. She got me into a robe and some slippers and drove me to the hospital. The Doctor arrived in a few minutes. It was about three o'clock in the morning. After checking me over, the Doctor said that it wasn't another heart attack and that he didn't think it was a stroke, but he wasn't sure just what it was. He told my wife to get me admitted to the hospital and they could monitor my vital signs the rest of the night and run some test the next day. After seeing that I was in a room and in bed, my wife went home changed clothes and went to school (she is a foreign language teacher) When she called that afternoon, I had been in a complete blank since I placed my glasses on the dresser. She thought that I was conscious all that time, and I guess I was, but to this day, I have no memory of the incidents of the night.

After my wife had called, all I could think about was the thought that I was due to retire the following day and that it didn't seem fair that I should have this happen at this time. For the next two days, I was put through the mill as far as testing went. They ran EEGs, EKGs, lumbar puncture, blood tests of all kinds, and too many other tests to remember. There was one more test that the Doctor wanted them to run, but the instrument that it was to be run on was not yet calibrated. The Doctor had me go to another Hospital and have the tests run. The instrument is called a C T Scanner. Which is short for Computed Tomography Scanning. It has only been in existence since 1971 and they are very costly, but they do the trick!

The Scanner is (in laymans terms) an Xray hooked to a computer. The patient lays on a table which moves into the scanner very minutely. The scanner itself is a large doughnut shaped case that the table moves through. The scanner sends a thin xray from one side of the case and it is 'read' on the other side and the results fed into a computer in another room. It takes one "Picture" every few seconds and the exposures are made on a 180° arc. It took about 45 minutes to complete one arc. Then, a dye is injected into the blood stream and the whole procedure is done again. This time for contrast for the final readout. When it is finished, it is like a positive print of (in my case) the brain.

A neurosurgeon was called in and the next day I went to his office. He very calmly had me sit down and then explained what the 'print' showed. A tumor on the right side of my brain about the size of a walnut. The idea of a brain tumor is always a terrible thing to think about, especially to those you love or to yourself. The Doctor quickly told me that it appeared to be benign and not cancerous. He said that the tumor had been growing for some time and that it had reached a point where it touched one area of the brain which made me 'black out'. He was going to be gone for a few days, but he wanted me in the Hospital on the 21st of February. For several days after I was admitted, numerous tests were run and because of a previous heart condition, I had check ups by cardiologists and also another complete work-up on blood, another C T Scan and after all of the results were in, the final word was operation.

On the morning of February 27, after the usual preparations, I was wheeled down to preoperation and had my head completely shaved. It felt rather strange to be without hair on my head for the first time in my life. Shortly thereafter, I was wheeled into the operating room for what was to be about an hour operation. My wife and eldest daughter were waiting in the waiting room for the hour to pass. When the surgeons got into my skull, they could not find the tumor where it appeared to be. They had to remove more of my skull than they had anticipated. The hours went by all too slowly for my family in the waiting room. By the time the surgeons found and removed the tumor, five hours had gone by and about eight square inches of my skull.

The next few days were times of consciousness and sleep, pain and irritation, and fleeting moments when I would have bad dreams. Sleep was a relief from the pain and being awake only made me irritated because of the fact that I could not move anything on my left side. The Doctor would test for reflexes and my right side was alright, but the left side, although I could feel things, I couldn't move anything. One day, I moved my big toe and the Doctor was happy, as was my wife that was by my bed. All I could think of was, "Here I am nearly sixty years old and already I have learned to move my toe" After five days in the intensive care unit, I was moved to a private room upstairs.

Then began the hardest problem I have ever had, in my life. I had to relearn all the things that I had taken for granted. A therapist came in daily and helped me move my arm and leg, to try to pick up objects, and generally help me become whole again.

Due to the paralysis, I could take nothing for pain. I had a headache that lasted for two weeks. During the day, the television helped me keep my mind off of the headache, but at night when everything was quiet and I couldn't sleep, because

of the pain, I reached the point where I contemplated jumping head first onto the floor. I might have done it, but for the fact that I couldn't move over to the side of the bed. During each day, I looked for the therapist to come in. I knew that if I were to ever be able to walk again, I need3d all the help and determination I could muster. One day, the therapist came in with a 'walker'. It had a small seat on it so I could sit down if I got tired. HAH! She helped me to my feet and put on some slippers and my robe. Then she helped me to grab hold of the walker and by moving my left leg, she started me walking. I made it to the door of the room and back in just about twenty minutes. It was about eight feet! I was completely exhausted. I never knew that one could get tired from thinking, but when the therapist brought some little pegs and a board with holes to put the pegs in, Just the process of trying to think about putting th pegs in the holes tired me out. I couldn't even touch the pegs, at first. Gradually, I learned what to do to reach and pick up the pegs. Then I learned to place them in the holes. Each day became a challenge. After the first day with the walker, I was given a walker with wheels. That got me to the door in much fadder time. ATX The third day, I walked without the walked, but with the help of the therapist. Each day I went farther and by the end of seven days, I could walk all the way to the therapy room without help. The room was about seventy-five yards away. In the therapy room, I exersized my legs adnworked out on a walking area which had hand rails on it to hol myself up. That one week to me was a miracle. Even my therapist thought it was an impossibility for someone to learn to walk again so fast. I always claim the first, it was from the Grace of God, a dedicated therapist, and Scotch stubbornness.

Three weeks after the operation, I was released from the hospital to go home and recuperate. My skull was still open (the skin was covering it), so I had to wear a 'hard hat' all the time except when I was sleeping. My head was sunken in on the right side and presented quite a sight to my grandchildren and the rest of my family. I spent the next three weeks resting for the next operation, which was for the purpose of placing a plastic plate to cover the hole in the skull. On the 4th of April, I reentered the hospital and on the 6th, the surgeons performed what is called a cranioplasty. They sew material into the skull and make a mesh like a tennis racket. Then they place some fast-drying plastic over it and the final operation is closing the incision and bandaging it up. After another week, I was released from the hospitla and went home. On the 17 of May, The surgeon released me with a clean bill of health. My Company then started me on my final vacation. (I had been drawing full pay for all the time I was incapacitated)

On the last day of June, both my wife and I retired. Me from Kodak, and she from her school. On the 2nd day of August, we left for a six month tour of Europe. MIRACLE ?