



I Think It's a Philips **By Dr. Jim Beaubien**

My Mom came to the Prairies as a young girl just after the turn of the century. She was raised with a strong sense of pioneer spirit and part of that spirit is that if you have a problem, you fix it, you do something about it. You don't sit ideally by.

She has had a good life and she's going to turn 90 this fall. A couple of years ago she went to a Farmers' Market to look at some produce and other goods. And she was walking across the farmyard she tripped over a piece of pigweed and fell to her knees. She was unable to get up. They called an ambulance, took her to the Doctor and they determined that she had broken her thigh bone in about 16 or 17 places from the weight of her fall. The Doctor told her that she was suffering from severe Osteoporosis and he informed her that she was lucky that she hadn't broken her fall by putting her hands down because she would have snapped both of her wrists as well.

She ended up in emergency department of a local city hospital and because of bed space pressure, finances and budgets she had to spend 3 days on her back in a gurney waiting for a bed to be available so she could have surgery.

When we talked to Mom about this waiting she displayed a fundamental part of her character which was to say how she felt sorry for the nurses, the "girls" as she calls them, and don't try to tell her that they are anything but "the girls", but she displayed a spirit of gratitude saying that she really felt sorry for them that they were trying to do the best job they could and she wouldn't want their job and that it must be hard to do that kind of work and she expressed an attitude of gratefulness for the treatment she received.

When we talked to my Mom that it must of been somewhat trying waiting for a bed in a gurney, on your back, in the hallway of an emergency department. She said, "Well, there's really only one thing about it that wasn't that good, she said, they wheeled in this 53 year old bachelor and put him on a gurney beside me and she said that you know that this is the closest I've been to a man in over 10 years (my father had been dead for over 10 years) and I couldn't even go out and get my hair done".

Mom went through her surgery, she went into rehabilitation, and she complied with the instructions given to her treatment and did a relatively good job of her recovery. Like so many people in her generation, when a professional asks you to do something, and you believe in them, you will follow through because you believe that they have your best interests in mind.

A year after her recovery she was visiting with my brother in Winnipeg over the Christmas holidays. She came out of the bathroom one morning and she said, "Boys, do one of you have a screw driver?" She was asked, "Why do you want a screw driver?" "Because I think a screw loose". After some inane comments about "we've been telling you this for years, Mom". "I'm serious", she said, and lifted up her dress to show a screw head sticking out about a 1/4 of an inch through her flesh. Everyone was upset and went into panic, but my Mom's reaction was to peer down at her leg, stretch her neck out, peer down at her thigh elevating it slightly so she could see and say, "I can't quite see, but I believe it's a Philips".

This is the pioneer spirit in action; if you have a problem, fix it. Now, even though my Mom's solution would have been inadequate, it still gave her a sense of control over her life and her environment. Family members immediately rushed her to the hospital in Winnipeg where it was determined that she had a severe bone infection. Ended up in the hospital for a two-week period on antibiotics for a course of time until the condition was under control. What, of course, had happened is that one of the screws that they had put into the plate to mend the original break in her thigh bone had become dislodged and the body was attempting to rid itself of this screw and so it gradually worked its way through the flesh. Even though my Mom's reaction to the situation was somewhat inappropriate because you simply don't fix a loose screw in your leg by tightening it, her response nevertheless was a very healthy one, it gave her a sense of control over her environment and it shows the pioneer spirit that if you have a problem you attempt to fix it. There is something very healthy about this attitude towards life. All of us need to develop the ability to ask for a screwdriver when we have a screw loose.