

Of late, I am having enormous toileting challenges. TMI. I know. (See Musings in *CST* May 2014 edition. Do you see a trend?)

I am post op from Friday's surgery on my left hand for "arthritis at the base of the thumb" – bone on bone on bone. No cartilage. No space. Nothing. Hurts like hell. Plus, you drop stuff 'cause your grip is *gone*. LH has often told me to "get a grip." Somehow, I don't *think* that's what he meant.

Prior to surgery, I figured I would need a sling. Not going to catch me in an ugly as sin orthopedic one. Appearance *is* everything. I Google "fashionable arm sling" and low and behold discover CastCoverz. They not only make a virtual wardrobe of slings, but cast covers for every taste and occasion. Who knew? I immediately ordered a black sling with skull and crossbones. Gotta have some fun with this. Cause it ain't gonna be fun. No way. No how.

Never being one to overlook the potential for a fashion statement, I determined that I also need cast covers. Didn't know I *needed* them until I learned that they *existed*. I ordered three.

Back to post op: It's been 24 hours. My arm is wrapped from the elbow to my fingers in so much gauze that it looks like a Q-Tip on steroids – feels like a ton of bricks. LH, a.k.a. "Nurse Ratched," is my caregiver. We're staying ahead of the pain. (Does that include him?) He wakes me every four hours to administer Percocet – whether I *think* I need it or not. Actually, I *can't* think. I'm in my happy place. This is *really good stuff!*

LH helps me out of bed to the potty. Walls are moving. My legs are rubber. He holds me up – supporting me step by step. Like walking up the aisle at our wedding. I almost passed out from fear of commitment. He gently places me on the commode. Leaves me with the phone on my lap. Page him when I'm finished.

I'm done. I contort and flush. Splash! The phone falls between my legs into the bowl. I scream, "@#\$\$%^&\*" and retrieve it in record time. I *think* it was record time. Time *was* kinda standing still. *Really* glad I had flushed. I think. LH comes running in, thinking the worst. The phone survived. LH was white as a ghost. The man loves me. What can I say?

Next challenge? What to wear for the post op visit to replace the Q-Tip with a cast? This is critical. *Must* look good for the paparazzi. I have *no* use of my left hand *at all*. And I'm on opioids. How about yoga pants? Good idea. LH dresses me in my Athleta spandex yoga pants. He offers that his expertise always was in pulling them down – so this is a new skill. I'm too out to lunch to really see the humor – although he tells me that I *did* laugh.

As we leave doc's office with my brand new black cast (goes with everything), I figure a just-in-case potty stop is warranted. We stop at the ladies restroom.

LH knocks. "Anybody here?" No response. He pushes the door open. There are several stalls. He guides me in to a stall. I'm leaning against the wall, tipsy from the narcotics. He'll wait outside. I manage with my right hand *and a great amount of difficulty* to get my pants down. Slowly. Inch by inch. Twisting and turning as I go. Icing on the cake would be to throw my back out. At least I had drugs for the pain. Happy this was not an emergency.

Pulling pants *down* was a walk in the park. Pulling them up – a whole other deal. I manage to get them as far as my knees and I'm stuck. I shuffle out of the stall with them puddled at my ankles and holler for LH to come help.

Close your eyes (*after* reading this) and picture:

LH enters the ladies room. He faces me with his back to the entry door. He puts his arms around me holding me close as he inches the back of the pants up. Then the front. Then the back. And he's tugging. And I'm gyrating. *Helping*. I envision someone walking in and being horrified – assuming that what we were doing was *not* what we were doing. This could have been pretty romantic if it wasn't so side splittingly funny.

I've had several debilitating accidents and surgeries over the years. But I *could* pull up my own pants. There were the mastectomy and reconstructive surgeries that were no picnic. But I *could* pull up my own pants. Came home on crutches from ski trips. But I *could* pull up my own pants. And the time I ripped up my ankle at the Temple of the Heaven in Beijing and came home on crutches. Again. *But I could pull up my own pants*.

Go have thumb surgery. Try pulling up your own pants. Let me know how it goes.

In a moment of weakness (musta been the drugs talking) I went back online and ordered two more cast covers. Overkill, you say? Do you wear the same shirt every day? Well, I'm not about to wear the same cast cover! *And* I can use them when I do the other hand. If LH doesn't shoot or divorce me first. 'Cause if he does, how in the world would I *ever* be able to pull up my pants?

And then, there's showering. Try doing *that* alone. You can wash one armpit. How do you wash the other? Which hand holds the shampoo bottle and which hand do you squirt it into when you are working as a one armed paper hanger? LH slips my arm into a plastic bag (the ones that the Republic come in when it rains

are perfect) and then *carefully* slides a pair of rubber bands (the ones that the Republic arrive in when it's not) to the top to seal it. I now know why I kept my subscription. He helps me into the shower. And joins me. When we married 45 years ago this was pretty sexy. Today, not so much.

And, there's grooming. LH was my hairdresser, "Monsieur Lucky Pierre." Complete with accent. He shampoos my hair in the shower and towel dries it with such enthusiasm you'd think he was polishing a bowling ball. Good thing I didn't get whiplash. He was the holder of the hair blower while I contorted with a round brush. I directed him. Blow it here. No, *here*. NO, HERE!

The back of my hair looked like a little old lady's. Flat. Scalp visible. LH called to my attention (repeatedly) that I had a hole in my head. Well, (1) I couldn't see it so it was fine with me; and (2) I'm on drugs so I really *don't care*.

I can do *nothing*.

Putting on pantyhose? Faggetaboutit. Only women of my generation wear pantyhose anymore anyway. Socks? Unlock a Ziploc? Tear *anything*? Zip *anything*? Button *anything*? Slice *anything*?

It is amazing what you *can* do with one hand – in combo with teeth and thighs. Not at the same time. Take the top off anything small? Teeth work well here.

Screw or unscrew anything of size? Teeth not a good idea unless considering tooth restoration, in which case clamp and have at it. Thighs *may* work. Opening "kid proof" tops? Just take a hammer to it.

At ten days, we've got cabin fever. *Gotta* get out. LH fashions a Rube Goldberg contraption from a beach towel and rubber bands to prop my arm up when we go out to dinner or the movies. He researches sweater clips on the Internet and then fashions a neat device out of a rubber band and binder clips to keep my jacket from falling off my left shoulder. He's *really* into rubber bands. My thumbs don't work. I can't squeeze the clips. LH to the rescue. He *resides* in rescue mode. Goes with the Y chromosome. He's got

to "fix" it. My darling LH!

He sits. He waits. Lest I need help with ANYTHING. It's adorable. IT IS DRIVING ME CRAZY.

At least I *can* wipe my own butt. There are definitely *some* things that can test a marriage – no matter *how* good it is.

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