

Traumatic injury: my story



Hello, Gentle Reader,

In 1989, I lifted, or should I more accurately say, yanked a large drink box full of wine bottles out of the back seat of a two door Datsun. I heard something go in my lower back. I was angry about carrying these bottles up a long flight of stairs to the social hall of a large church. My husband in his characteristic generosity offered to cook an elegant meal for a visiting prelate from the Russian Orthodox church in Moscow. While I approved a grand reception for this honored guest and his entourage, I criticized my husband for trying to do this alone. Plenty of people would love to cook with Don Bell. My only task was delivering the drink.

I could feel the place in my back where the terrible sensation had come from. I carried the box and several more like it upstairs anyway.

The next morning, I awoke early, still smoldering over the piles of potato skins on the kitchen counter and the olive oil slick floor, remnants of the single-handed cooking effort the night before. Jack LaLanne was just beginning his exercise routine on TV. I took my position on the large expanse of our hook-latched rug covering the living room floor. I would work out my anger through exercise. On all fours, he called out *doggie leg lifts*.

Snap.

Whatever happened lifting the box, leg lifts finished me off. I rolled on the floor sobbing in pain. All my previous judgments against people who complained of bad backs taunted me. Pay back for lack of understanding and sympathy. Those legions who suffered, did they suffer as I was now suffering? Were they not the malingering lazy bums I judged them to be? What was I going to do?

I could not stand or sit but remained on all fours. I slowly in extreme pain pulled myself to the staircase and up to our bedroom where Don still lay sleeping. Once I struggled into bed and lay on my back, I began to breathe more deeply. I went into head honcho mode commanding my groggy husband to get my day planner and find the phone number of my massage therapist. It was 7 a.m.

This amazing person came over two hours later. Don had already gotten me a 24-inch bolster cushion so my legs were in a chair position while lying flat on my back. This was the only pain free position I could find. Mary worked on me for over an hour, calming the sympathetic spasms in my shoulders, neck, upper back and arms. She persuaded me against my wishes to take a muscle relaxant. She came back twelve hours later and repeated the treatment.

The next morning I was able to inch my way painfully down the stairs and into the car. Ouch. That move brought tears to my eyes. Don drove me to my chiropractor who gently calmed the spinal column and relocated the offending L5 into its proper place.

I was 52 years old. A skier, hiker, biker, dancer, runner, I valued physical fitness next to Godliness. More than Godliness. I was determined to overcome this glitch. Little did I know what was in store for me as I set about healing from an L5 .

Tell me your story. How did your back begin to hurt? What makes you worry about ending up in a wheel chair? How did arthritis begin and where has it taken you?

My story of treatment and recovery continues next week. Stay tuned.

Betsy Bell

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1. back pain
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5. spinal stenosis
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