

In Like a Lamb, Out Like a Lion

The month of March came in like a lamb and about mid-way started to roar! I hope that by sharing my journey, it helps you on yours.



I was experiencing urinary retention. In other words, I could only pee a wee bit (pun very much intended) or not at all. That first episode resolved itself and I went about my merry way. Now fast-forward to Sunday, the 9th. I was at a friend's house and started to experience retention again. That night I was up just about every hour using the toilet. I figured it was time to call my doctor and that's exactly what I did the next morning.

Monday morning I was having no bathroom troubles at all until I made a decision that in the red-hot moment seemed like a good one. Roughly an hour and half before my appointment I drank 16 oz. of cranberry juice. I used the bathroom a couple of times and thought I better drink some more fluids. I wanted to make sure I gave the doctor a good urine sample! I managed to gulp down another 32 ounces of water.

I was miserable when I arrived for my appointment! That was not one of the better ideas I've ever owned up to. Thank goodness I was right across the hall from the bathroom! I would peek out the door and then make a beeline to you-know-where. The nurse would smile at me each time she saw me head out the door on tiptoes. When my doctor came into the room, I couldn't sit down. I was shifting from one foot to the other. Have



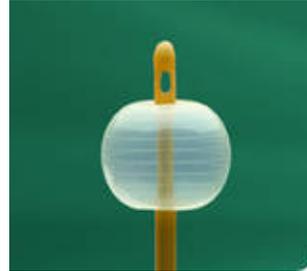
you ever been on a road trip where you have to use the bathroom and the nearest exit is miles away?

Imagine that sensation fifty million times exaggerated. He arranged for an appointment with an urologist and a CT-Scan the next day. If my

symptoms did not improve before then I was to go to the emergency room.

Rex took me to the ER that night. Something comes over me when I get into a hospital. Modesty goes right out the window. The nurse brought a port-a-potty into the room so I wouldn't have to walk to the bathroom. Sometimes it felt better to sit on it then to stand. My favorite moment was when the ER doctor pulled the curtain aside to find me sitting on it with

my drawers around my knees all casual like. The surprised and embarrassed look on his face was priceless. He zipped back behind the curtain while I pulled up my pants and got onto the bed. The nurse had measured the amount of fluid in my bladder using an ultrasound. Whoa that bladder was full and then some! It gives a whole new meaning to having your back teeth float! There wasn't any other choice. It was catheter time.



I am one of those truly lucky people. Catheters do not bother me one bit. I have been blessed with an ultra stretchy urethra. The whole idea of a catheter made my husband cringe. All I wanted was some relief. Once it was in place, and my bladder started to empty, I had the biggest goofy smile on my face. I jokingly asked Rex for a cigarette. Oh what sweet relief when one has had to pee since 1:00 in the afternoon and it was now 7:00 pm! I was instructed to take the catheter home with me. The urologist would remove them the next day.

I named my bags Bob Sr. and Bob Jr. or “The Bobs”.

The kids, having been up late the night before, stayed home from school and were naturally curious. They kept staring at Bob Sr. and would pepper me with questions. B. Bunny thought Bob was kind of gross. It didn't stop her strange fascination with Mom and her new appendage. I was eagerly looking forward to seeing the urologist, having a Bobectomy, and finding out physically what was going on.

My theory was this: I needed to be a bit more “pissy” when the situation warranted or I wasn't going with the flow enough.

I even solemnly swore to the Universe, Rex and whoever else was listening that I would be much better in these two areas.

I also told Rex I would never again joke about trading him in for a new model. He was (and is) my knight in shining armor and my rock. If there was one thing I gained it was a greater appreciation for the person he is.

Of course that didn't stop me from making quips that it had been several years since I've tested him with a trip to the ER.

Tuesday afternoon Rex and I were sitting at the urologist's office. My condition was a rarity in his field. *Hmmm*. That sets the thoughts reeling to unwanted things in a flash! It took all I could muster to keep my attention on what I wanted. He wanted to do further tests, suggested I keep the catheter in for one more night and remove it the next morning. He would be out of the office; however I was instructed to see the treatment nurse for a bladder ultrasound. He also wanted me to bring in the results from the CT-Scan. He would leave instructions for the nurse to contact him with the ultrasound and CT-Scan results. One more day with "The Bobs" wouldn't hurt anything. Gosh, as much appreciation as I had for "The Bobs" the night before it was wearing thin. It was a bit uncomfortable to walk and I certainly couldn't sit upright on my bottom. He also caused endless fascination for the cats. After our visit with the urologist it was time to pick up my "Berry Smoothie Barium" from the x-ray department at the hospital so I'd be ready for the CT-Scan.



In the car I twisted off the cap, peeled back the foil and took a cautious sniff. It smelled like berries. I took a swig. It sure didn't taste like any berry smoothie I've had the pleasure of consuming! It was similar to drinking water thickened with cornstarch with a faint undertone of artificial berry flavoring.

In other words, it was yucky! I tried to get Rex to try it and he refused. We stopped back at the house to let the dogs out and drove back to the hospital for my 6:30 PM appointment. While we were waiting, the fire alarm in the hospital went off! One lady suggested we leave now before they locked down the doors. Another nurse told us to sit tight. In her twenty-plus years at the hospital it's always been something minor that caused the alarms to go off. I think the first gal wanted to go home. The all clear was given and off I went with another nurse.

I've never had a CT-Scan before and like a kid was fascinated with the whole process. She gave me a Styrofoam cup approximately a quarter full of that nasty barium drink. I groaned about having to drink more of it and made some wisecrack. She laughed. The machine reminded me of something from a science fiction movie. You lay on a bed and at the foot is a giant square with round hole in the center. The CT-Scan takes "slice" pictures of your insides. On that round part there was a smiley face and a face with its breath held.

A canned computer voice said, "Inhale please. Hold your breath please. You may breath."

It sounded like a huge motor when the machine was running. After a few runs, I was given an IV and informed that it would feel warm. I was warned that some folks feel like they have to use the bathroom, however with the catheter in place I may not feel that sensation. I felt this rush of warmth all through my body and it settled in the groin area. That was cool! I'm glad I had the catheter in place or I would have sworn I had just peed my pants. I had to come back the next day to get the CD of pictures the urologist requested.

Wednesday, the alarm blared at 4:00 AM. I performed a self-Boobectomy at 4:15 AM. When I was done and Bob was in the trash, I started an impromptu Hula/Elvis hip wriggle. I was shakin' that booty! I was free! I felt great! I could pee on my own again! Life was GRAND! Rex caught me in the middle of my celebration and shook his head.

The kids wanted to know what happened to Bob and where he went. Their eyes grew as big as saucers when I told them I removed him. I sure wish I could see the visual display in their wee little heads! I sent them off to school and was full of confidence that "All Was Well!" in my world.

I learned my lesson from the day before and decided that I would drink 8 oz of fluid every hour and monitor how many times I visited the bathroom. The morning zipped by without incident and soon I was on my way to see the treatment nurse. She had me use the bathroom before proceeding. She placed nice cold jelly stuff on my lower abdomen and measured the fluid at 531 cc. WHAT??? I only drank 24 ounces total from 7:00 AM until 12:30 PM? How could that much be in there? I held on to my humor and continued to crack jokes about my "pissy" theory, going with the flow and whatever else I could think of that would cause a laugh. She measured me again and this time it read even more fluid! I apologized for my "deer in the headlights" look. She gently smiled and reassured me they would get to the bottom of this. The doctor was called and you can guess what he recommended, another catheter. I made the crack that Bob must not have wanted to leave me yet.

I complimented her on a job well done. She smiled at me kind of funny. I don't think folks who insert catheters get too many compliments. I noticed a puzzled look on her face. There was only 100 cc in the bag. She consulted with another nurse who suggested she deflate the balloon to see if that helped. Nope. Only a tiny smidge more came out. She

consulted with one of the urologists in the office and the next thing I knew I was getting an X-ray. Well that showed an interesting thing. There was the catheter in place. There was my bladder, empty. Something else was showing up! Another consultation took place and it was decided to remove the catheter. We laughed. I wouldn't have to deal with Bob, Frank or Harry for that matter. She sent me on my way and I drove home feeling relieved. This thought floated through my head, "Wouldn't it be funny if I have to have a hysterectomy?" I dismissed it and simply enjoyed the relief of not having to deal with Bob.

There was a message waiting for me from my family doctor. His office asked that I call immediately. I did so and that's when I found out the results of the CT-Scan.

It was one of those moments when your world goes topsy-turvy and the rug gets pulled out from under your feet. Toto, I wasn't in Kansas any more!

"The CT-Scan shows you have a lump that is 10.4 cm X 14.4 cm X 12 cm. It appears to be coming from about the middle of your uterus," my doctor informed me in a kind gentle voice. "When we see something like this it causes some concern."

I informed him that I have a history of fibroids.

"That could explain it and let's hope that's all it is," he replied. "I'm going to schedule an appointment with your OB/GYN. We'll call you back with the details."

I felt a strange relief. It wasn't anything to do with my bladder or neurological! One of the things the urologist mentioned was that urinary retention in females was a symptom of an underlying neurological problem and recommended that I see a neurologist. It could be a sign of multiple sclerosis. Wasn't he full of positive news?

My doctor's office called me back and had scheduled an appointment for 8:00 AM on Friday morning. The OB/GYN wanted a blood test done prior to my appointment and could I have it done that evening? Sure! Why not? It was off to Pathology Labs.

There was one other person in the waiting room. The lady behind the counter asked him if he had been fasting. He told her yes. Then he made a wise crack about having a colonoscopy and things shoved in various orifices up to your throat ruining one's appetite. I retorted that having things in your urethra wasn't fun either! We laughed about doctors and if people didn't have orifices, then some doctors would be out of business. I found out later that he was a retired doctor!

When it was my turn to go, I discovered my doctor's office made an appointment with the wrong OB/GYN. There was a bit of a scramble, phone calls back and forth before it was corrected. What a small world it is. The woman behind the desk used to work with my OB/GYN!

My veins roll at will. That's what I tell any nurse who needs to take blood. This week, I had one cooperative vein in my right arm. It had already been poked twice and it looked as if she would have to poke it again. In vain, she tried to find another however they were stubbornly refusing to cooperate. Needles don't bother me that much and what was another poke when I was so much closer to the end of this weird week?

Thursday was so pleasant! I was nervous yet it was easy to keep my thoughts focused on the positive. I came up with a new theory about the lump. I had been teasing my dog Joey about her fatty lumps. Well, no more of that! I ran to store to purchase some chicken food and water softener salt. I spent the rest of the day pampering myself. I was in a great mood when later that evening the phone rang.

"Mrs. Swartz?" asked the voice. I replied that yes it was indeed Mrs. Swartz.

"This is Dr. X. I'm looking at the CT-Scan photos and this concerns me," said the urologist. I informed him that my family physician had already told me the results. I also told him that I had a history of fibroids and that it appeared to be coming from my uterus.

"Well that may be, however I can't really see your bladder. You could be looking at cancer."

GULP. He used that scary "C" word. My heart sank. I told him I had an appointment with my OB/GYN on Friday. He wanted more tests prior to any surgery. Great. More tests. I asked if I could have my doctor contact him and he agreed.

I wanted to cry. I was scared silly. My Positive Pants attitude sounded like an extra huge whoopee cushion as it deflated.

To Be Continued....

Namaste,

Tracy



The Domestic Gourdess is a creative fiend. She delights in playing with dried gourds and blogging. Her gourdacious creations can be found at <http://thecandlegourdess.com>. You can read about a day in the life of a Domestic Gourdess at <http://thedomesticgourdess.com>. Warning, reading her blog has been known to cause giggles, laughter and uncontrollable spitting of beverages. You will be entering another realm of pure silliness and may not return the same person when you leave. You have been warned.