

I'm convinced the curbs outside the physical therapy building are getting higher. I'm also confident that if I get one more rip in the knees of my nice slacks, Marge is liable to blow a fuse. We've been married for 50 years and I'm well aware when she has reached the end of her proverbial rope. That's where we find ourselves nowadays, dangling at the end of our frayed ropes. I have Parkinson's disease and it's changed my marriage, my body, and my plans.

It was a year ago that my Parkinson's was confirmed, I remember because it was two days after my 72nd birthday. At the party everyone thought it was comical that my hand shook so much that my cake left icing smears across my face. As if I had done it on purpose. To me they were bright red surgery streaks of shame. Two days later Marge and I were sitting in the doctor's office. "You have Parkinson's disease, do you understand what this means?" the young doctor asked. I understood his words, each one he fumbled out of his mouth. What I didn't come close to comprehending was how my life would change. What I couldn't fathom was how quickly my sporty retirement playing golf and tennis had just vanished.

My Parkinson's didn't creep through me like a shy houseguest. It wasn't polite or subtle instead it came charging through me like a WWII bomber with force and permanence. The tremors are constant and the doctor's haven't been able to dial in my meds so walking is tough enough, but it's the little things that cause me the most hassle; brushing my teeth, zipping up my pants, even changing channels using the god damn remote becomes a monumental endeavor that leaves me tired and defeated. My weekly golf outing ceased abruptly, me swing a golf club with a target is a cruel joke now.

Before Parkinson's this would have delighted Marge, she always was jealous of my golf buddies.

The first few times I fell Marge seemed to take it as a personal insult. Once it happened at church as I was climbing the stairs leading to the front entrance. Some of the congregations was milling around before the service. I missed a steps edge, then I couldn't reach out for the rail to catch my balance, I struck the ground like a fallen tree. Marge stared down at me with contempt and utter disappointment. "How could you?" she spat, "In front of all my friends." During the service I slumped in the pew like a scolded child, staring at the blood that had seeped through my trousers. This was not going to be the golden years either one of us intended.

The physical therapist I'm working with, Jo, agrees that I should be able to get out of the car easier than what I'm currently able to do, so we've made a plan. I'm supposed to concentrate and think about each movement I do before I do it. That would be easier if Marge weren't always nagging me to get out so that she can lock up. I miss driving, I guess what I really miss is being in control. I'm not as sure Marge misses me maintaining composure sometimes I think she relishes the moments when I freeze and stand there like a statue crumbling in the moment. I think Marge will come around to the inevitable fact that I'm no longer the star quarterback she married. My granddaddy always said, "if you pull the skin off a snake you'll kill it, if you wait long enough, when it's ready, it will shed that skin on it's own." I'll just wait and let my snake shed her skin in her own sweet time.

I'm not going to let that curb outside physical therapy trip me up any longer. I've decided that curbs are overrated. From now on I'm using the ramp and avoiding the curbs

all together. I'm not sure why that didn't occur to me before now. I guess I'm more open to the changes that are happening whether I want them or not. I'll adapt to my new body, I'll adjust my plans, and I'll reconcile my marriage. The Parkinson's just adds a new element to everything, especially navigating the curbs in life.