

Patient Tells Story Of 6 Hospital Days

This is my story of my six days spent at the Shouldice Clinic where I had two hernia operations one day apart. The late Dr. Earle Shouldice performed the hernia operation elevating the technique to a fine art. His son, also a doctor, is carrying on the technique and tradition at the new 88-bed clinic which began operating at Thornhill in 1969. The team effort of the clinic staff conveys confidence and efficiency, while maintaining a fraternity and home-like atmosphere.

I first knew that I had a hernia in August 1969 while on a bus tour of the United Kingdom. It became necessary for me to keep my right hand in my right pants pocket in order to press against the lower part of my abdomen to hold the hernia in place.

This I did for two weeks. There was a mixed group of eighteen people on the bus. At first I got away with it. No one noticed. Then there were looks of amusement.

Then when the truth was allowed to leak out, I received their sympathy. I secured a truss in Edinburgh. This permitted me to enjoy the remainder of the tour.

When I returned to London, Ontario, I immediately wrote to Shouldice of Toronto. I did this because two of my friends had wonderful results from their hernia operations by Shouldice and also my doctor said "They are the experts." In my letter I told them that I was in the process of taking off ten pounds to get down from 156 to 146 stripped. They promptly answered my letter, sending me a diet, and also telling me to get down to 146 lbs. with my clothes on.

This meant reducing another five lbs. Muscular me didn't think that my five foot three inch frame, with heels, carried that much insulation. This is a much better word than fat or blubber.

I was examined January 3 in Toronto at the Downtown office. A date of January 26 was established for my operation. Four more pounds had to come off, making a total of 14 pounds.

I reported at the clinic at 7750 Bayview Avenue at 1:30 pm Sunday. The exterior of the clinic and the forty-four acres of ravine and woodlot, made me think that this was a swank country club, not a hospital. The carpeted foyer, lounges, and corridors and the beautiful views that I could see from the picture windows, seem to confirm this idea. However, there was no bar.

Just at that moment a white frocked doctor appeared, and I was weighed in before I was booked in. If you haven't lost the required number of pounds, you are rescheduled. I made it. I was later assigned to room 220.

My semi-private room had two single beds two night tables and a desk all in dark oak, with rich brown carpet and matching bed spreads. The soft brown and gold drapes over the picture window would do credit to the Holiday Inn.

This can't be a clinic, I kept telling myself. I met my roommate Charles Jacobs and others of the graduating class of January 26, 1970. At 5:30 pm I went downstairs to the dining room for dinner. The room was spacious, well appointed, with a home-like atmosphere. It was made so, I think, by the round tables that seated six people. We each introduced ourselves, just like a convention.

People came from all points of the U.S. and Canada, and from all walks of life. The age varied from four-and-one-half years, to eighty-seven. In spite of this, we had a number of things in common. First, each of us had a hernia or a rupture. Second, each had decided to have the necessary operation to correct the condition. Third, each had selected the Shouldice Clinic as the place for the repair to bread basket. And tomorrow was R. B. Day.

Several friends and relatives of the patients joined us for the nicely served dinner. Afterwards we were instructed to get into our dressing gowns and pyjamas and house slippers. This was to be our attire for the next four days.

At nine o'clock we returned to the dining room for a snack. Immediately afterwards I retired to my room to take care of a shave job. This was a dry shave over a wide area for the

coming operation. The nurse said "I'll be around to check the shaves. I have caught the devil too many times from the doctors. This time the shaves are going to be right. My barbering activities were pronounced excellent. Then down with some pills. Lights out. It was ten o'clock and time to go to sleep.

Twenty minutes to six came around very quickly the next morning. I was given no breakfast and was forbidden to take a drink of water. I was told to put on this white gown so that it was easy to identify those having an operation, and to wait.

At eight o'clock a young man escorted me downstairs to a cot. I was given two small capsules containing a yellow powder. These were delightful things. I became beautifully content, partially stupid. But I was aware of what was going on.

Next I was escorted to the operating table, and I climbed up on the table myself. A curtain was raised between me and the doctors. I felt a few pricks as the area for the operation was frozen. Then I watched the electric clock go around. I could see a little movement on the other side of the curtain. The nurse checked my pulse at my temple once in a while. She had soft hands.

Forty-five minutes later the doctor dictated to the nurse, some medical terms related to my operation in a very nonchalant voice, as if this was an everyday affair. What a let-down. This was a very important event in my 63-year young life.

However, I realize that this was the second operation performed by Dr. Brown and Dr. John this day and they would in all probability perform one or two more before 1 pm. A total of 17 people were operated in the five operating rooms during the morning. No operations in the afternoon, I was told.

With assistance, I climbed down off the operating table and made my way back to my cot. In about twenty minutes I returned to the bed in my room, with guidance. The nurse gave me some pills and juice for a chaser. After a little snooze and a sponge bath, I got up and had a walk. The nurses are very efficient and considerate.

At 4:30 pm I was served my dinner in bed. I found that my little night table had a tricky concealed shelf that swung around over the bed and provided a table. I sat on the edge of my bed to eat my dinner. I got up and walked around and at nine o'clock went downstairs for a snack. Then after a back rub I went to sleep at ten o'clock.

Somewhere between six and seven o'clock, I was given pills and juice. Then I got up, did a little exercise, went for a walk, and went downstairs at eight for a breakfast of oatmeal, bacon and two eggs, toast and coffee. The fellowship is terrific. Everyone is talking to everyone else. Why not. We had all been through the same experience. At 8:45 we were all hustled back to our beds to be examined by the doctor.

We were instructed to lie on top of the bed. A nurse preceded the doctor and she instantly removed one side of the narrow bandage, exposing the incision. This was the first time that I had a peek at the operating doctor's artistic work.

It was a thing of beauty, a very thin straight line with 17 clamps spaced along the 4" incision. In some ways my mid-section looked like an abstract painting. Then in hurried seconds he removed eight of the clamps. The other eight he left till the next morning.

Promptly at 10 o'clock all patients assembled in one of the main lounges for exercise. This is a daily affair. The nurse turns the record player on and then you stretch your arms in all directions in time with the music. The next exercise is bending sideways from the waist. This is followed by attempting to bend forward and touch the floor. All patients that had an operation the previous day are excused from this exercise. Then all march around the corridor, take long steps and swing the arms. This is to promote blood circulation. All are then dismissed.

Everyone starts to talk. Some play pool. Card games are organized, and checkers. Some

talk about gas or just plain pain and strain. The repair was three as strong, as originally. The three layers of muscles were rearrange and sewn into place using stainless steel wire. No screening is used. All patients are to be examined once a year by the clinic after the first year. Your family doctor can do this and the bill can be sent to Shouldice, if it is inconvenient to visit the clinic. This is done for nine years.

Most patients have a wistful feeling when leaving, as they say goodbye to the doctors and nurses and friends. Three thousand and eighty-eight patients performed this ritual in 1969. My neat repair jobs are guaranteed. Should they re-occur within ten years, my bread basket will be repaired for free. So now all that remain is to warm up the car that has been resting in the parking lot and drive home.

Since I have returned home I have met a couple of friends who have also been to the clinic in Toronto. We greeted each other like Brother Elks. The surgery, in fact, seems like the initiation ceremony to the Shouldice Health Club.

insisting that Dr. Shouldice had to be around when they had their operations.

It was decided Dr. Obney would ask patients on the waiting list if they would be happy to go ahead with Dr. Shouldice's understudy, a doctor trained for many months in the hospital founder's method.

There turned out to be a lot more willing patients than expected and Dr. Obney ended up having 38 operations done by himself and the staff in the first 1 1/2 weeks.

The surgery then had no emergency operating room lighting, and the lights went out. Dr. Obney finished up one of his first solo operations by flashlight. The surgery continued in operation until after the 38 operations were done under Dr. Obney.

Dr. Shouldice arrived back from holiday and was very impressed and pleased with Dr. Obney's work. After that Dr. Obney took on progressively more difficult operations. From then on he had Dr. Shouldice's best teaching attention, support and encouragement.

Chief Surgeon President 24 Years With Shouldice

Dr. Nicholas Obney, chief surgeon and head of the medical staff, has performed 18,500 hernia operations in his 24-year career at Shouldice Hospital.

Dr. Obney is also president of Shouldice Hospital and a chairman of the board of directors.

He was the personal understudy and confidant of the hospital founder, the late Dr. Earle Shouldice.

"The hospital was built on public service. Every patient gets the same treatment," says Dr. Obney.

"The basic thing is good surgery and good medicine, the very best we know. Then comes the human element, with the nursing staff being a major key."

"The whole thing originated with Dr. Shouldice. He trained us. We are carrying on his tradition and passing it on," says Chief Surgeon Obney.

Dr. Obney came to Canada from Eastern Europe with his parents. He was then nine years old.

He attended Charles Fraser Public School and Parkdale Collegiate in Toronto. He stood first in his class every year through high school.

To be a doctor, he says, a student must be good in science and maths. The student can't be content with just passing. He must be determined to get to the top, because competition is so keen at medical school and in the profession. The student aiming for medicine must be one who struggles to reach as nearly as possible toward perfection.

But this isn't all, says Dr. Obney. To be a doctor, the student must like people and be interested in them. He must know how to work with them. Especially in surgery he must be able to inspire confidence.

The Shouldice Hospital has been Dr. Obney's life work, although in the early years he never expected it to be. The responsibility and involvement just grew and grew, he says.

Dr. Obney is a graduate of Toronto University. He interned at Toronto General Hospital. During World War II he was an army medical officer, leaving active service with the rank of captain.

Dr. Obney is married to the former Stephanie Kasyn from Manitoba. They have one daughter Jeannette, who is graduating in medicine in June at the University of Toronto.

He was still in his army uniform for a week when, at age 28, he joined the Shouldice Surgery staff at the old Church Street location. He was recommended to Dr. Shouldice by his commanding officer in the army.

Actually, Dr. Obney had known Dr. Shouldice for about 10 years. Dr. Shouldice was his clinical teacher at the university, but then he was only one of the veteran professor's many students.

Dr. Obney next met the hospital's founder when Dr. Shouldice was serving as the army's surgical consultant. He worked in the army a year at the Toronto Exhibition Grounds with Dr. Shouldice.

Actually, the Shouldice Surgery at one time was pretty well staffed with old army buddies. In 1948 a 50-year acquaintance of Dr. Shouldice, Dr. Noble Black, joined the staff from the army, and worked in the hospital until his death in 1965.

When Dr. Obney joined the staff, Dr. Shouldice was then still operating and felt he needed some help. Dr. Obney started work the day after Dr. Shouldice suggested it.

A second operating room was opened and Dr. Obney began doing his own operations alone in 1948, after close to two years of careful tutoring by Dr. Shouldice. But Dr. Obney continued to be advised by Dr. Shouldice during difficult operations.

In 1948 Dr. Shouldice decided to take a holiday in Florida and the hospital faced being closed down while he was away. Many patients then were still

He performed an appendectomy on a small girl and the next day noticed her jumping about happily in her bed. He observed that no harm resulted from this and she was shortly back at her school. In 1936 he performed four hernia operations and all his patients insisted on getting out of bed to use the washroom. He let them do this and they all recovered well.

By this stage he was convinced of the advantages of early ambulation but he also knew he would have to proceed cautiously. A blunt, determined and sometimes tactless man, Earle Shouldice had already rubbed a number of his medical colleagues the wrong way. Conservative doctors distrusted the way young Shouldice kept questioning the accepted way of doing things.

He now realized that if he encouraged early ambulation and then post-operative complications arose because of deficiencies in surgical techniques, the ambulation, not the surgery, would be blamed. To give early ambulation a fair trial under the stern gaze of his detractors he would first have to become highly expert in surgery. The decisions he was making in the late 30s would eventually establish the whole direction of his life.

In June 1940 he became a consulting surgeon to the Canadian army and soon learned that many volunteers could not be accepted for service because they suffered from hernias. Canada needed soldiers but hospital space and doctors were both hard to get for such non-emergency surgery which normally needed three weeks of hospitalization. The doctor discussed this problem with Charles Rathgeb of the Canadian Comstock Company. Shouldice contributed his own services free and, as a contribution to the war effort, Rathgeb agreed to under-write hospital costs for the hernia patients.

Under this arrangement the doctor operated upon many men. At times when there was a shortage of hospital beds he would operate in the Emergency Department and later in the day drive his patients to a medical fraternity house where the students nursed him for two or three days. Under this arrangement Dr. Shouldice performed seventy operations to grow.

He performed an appendectomy upon men all of whom later joined the army.

The volunteers were, of course, delighted and rapidly spread the word in their hometowns. Civilian patients started contacting the doctor and asked him to operate upon them too. Under war conditions this was impossible but a nurse kept a list of all such applications and by the time Dr. Shouldice left the army 200 civilian patients were awaiting him.

BOUGHT BUILDING

In May 1945 he bought an old nursing home on Church Street in central Toronto and with the help of workers provided by Charles Rathgeb, converted it into a private hospital. Despite the shortage, he managed to find two nurses.

When no anaesthetist was available he solved that problem by adapting a procedure which had proved successful with the army recruits; he injected novocaine as an infiltration anaesthetic. He performed one or two operations every day and from the start there was never a shortage of patients. Twenty-five years later the Shouldice hospital still usually has a waiting list of over 400.

As more and more patients requested operations, Dr. Shouldice extended facilities by buying other houses nearby, and finally owned four buildings on one block. Gradually other doctors joined his hospital. In 1953 a rambling estate in Thornhill, on the northern outskirts of Toronto, was purchased and the second Shouldice hospital was established.

On August 20, 1965, Earle Shouldice died but his hospital and the techniques he developed continue. His son, Byrnes is now a surgeon there and staff doctors include many who have worked with the institute for ten or more years. Managing Director, Jack MacKay, joined the hospital in 1950 and Dr. Obney is now in his twenty-fifth year. Head Nurse, Caroline Martin, has spent twenty-five years at the hospital. The new hospital will serve as a memorial to Dr. Earle Shouldice — but it will not be a static memorial. In this specialized branch of medicine, as in all others, techniques will continue to improve and evolve, and knowledge and experience formed seventy operations to grow.

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Short Length Of Stay Makes Big Difference At Shouldice Hospital

The short length of time the average patient stays is one of the things that makes the difference at Shouldice Hospital.

The average stay per hernia patient in the United States is nine days.

At Shouldice Hospital the average patient stays only four days.

The hospital does about one-sixth of the hernia operations done in Ontario and about 25% of its patients come from the United States.

Of all the patients that come to Shouldice Hospital, about 13% are described as recurrences. That is, patients that had previous operations elsewhere before coming to this specialty institution.

More of the U.S. patients are recurrences, about 16%.

When the founder, Dr. Earle Shouldice, started his surgery, he had a 12% recurrence. He learned by operating on some of his own recurrences and ran his own follow-up research project.

In this way he was able to determine what had gone wrong and so was able to bring about a steady improvement in technique.

The Shouldice Hospital's hernia recurrence rate is now down below one percent.

We Are Happy To Be The Supplier of Fresh Produce FOR THE NEW Shouldice Hospital

7750 BAYVIEW AVE., THORNHILL

P. T. MANNONE PRODUCE

126 ESPLANADE EAST - TORONTO 1

Shouldice Hospital Opens May 30

(Continued from Page 21)

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Enjoys All Sports After Surgery

An active sports-minded teenager was one of the many former Shouldice Hospital patients who wrote letters of appreciation during the past year.

The Colgan, Ontario 15-year-old wrote as follows:

"I had been planning on writing you a letter thanking you for the wonderful hernia operation you performed on me when I was four.

"Before I got a chance to write that letter, I received in the mail an envelope with two pictures of your new location. It looks very modern and illustrates your area of progress in the modern world.

"I am 15 now, and for nine years I have had that operation. And not once has it ever given me any trouble. Boy, I must admit I have been quite rough on it.

"I played baseball all summer as a catcher. I play foot-

ball for our high school as half-back. I also play hockey as a defenceman and spare goalie.

"Thus, if anything were ever to have gone wrong, it would have been during those years. I must say my mother always told me to be careful and not to strain myself.

"But don't think that I'm going to strain myself playing football, hockey or baseball, no sir.

"And above all that, I live and work on a 200 acre farm. Thus I have now realized that I have complete confidence in myself.

"And I'm proud to say I am participating actively in every sport, without a single handicap.

"My thanks to the wonderful staff at Shouldice Hospital, and my recommendation to you will always be extended."

Congratulations to

The Shouldice Hospital

ON THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THEIR NEW EXTENSION

7750 BAYVIEW AVE., THORNHILL

S. Bone & Sons Florists

195 AVENUE RD., TORONTO

We Salute A Friend & Neighbor SHOULDICE HOSPITAL

THORNHILL

on the Official Opening of their new extension

Thornhill Paint Supplies Ltd.

7707 YONGE STREET THORNHILL

Shouldice Hospital Site Once Was Owned By Two Farmers, Butcher

The site occupied by the new Shouldice Hospital in the Toronto fringe community of Thornhill once belonged to three local residents.

In 1937 three parcels of land were brought under single ownership as the site for an illustrious country estate home.

The land deeds show the three parcels were purchased from bachelor farmer Major Dean, butcher William Dean, and farmer Howard Jackson Ness.

The purchaser was the late C. George McCullagh, a powerful financier who once owned both "The Toronto Globe and Mail" and "The Toronto Telegram" newspapers.

Mr. McCullagh was a well known associate of former Ontario premier and former federal

leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, George Drew.

A London, Ontario native, the late Mr. McCullagh worked in a brokerage firm and was aided in his career by the owner of Wright-Hargreaves Mines Ltd. of Toronto.

When Mr. McCullagh died, the property was inherited by his family, which included his wife, two boys and a girl.

The late Dr. Earle Shouldice, founder of the hospital, purchased the site in 1953.

The mansion built by the former owner was first used to provide an additional hospital space for the Shouldice Surgery's downtown facilities. It was renovated according to the hospital's requirements and later incorporated into the new building.

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