

SEEING

March to me, has always been a bit of a sinister month. What with robins hiding in barns to keep warm, and the constant threat of 'in like a lion', or 'out like a lion'. People too act as if life was nearing its end with the lemming-like, rush to the south during March Break and for those who care, the beginning of Lent occurs this month. What can you expect when it is named after a God of War - seems somewhat prophetic this year doesn't it.

I was always struck by Shakespeare's 'beware the Ides of March' warning to Julius Caesar and the modernized chant by Julius' wife Calpurnica in the Wayne and Schuster version - 'Don't go big Julie, don't go.'

It was about the Ides this year that we began an adventure not by choice but by having it thrust upon us. As background three years ago I had cataract operations on both my eyes which I subsequently learned for some people makes them prone to retinal separation. Two years ago I had retinal separation in my left eye which took me to Kingston and the Ophthalmology Clinic at the Hotel Dieu Hospital.

It was initially felt that a minor operation sealing the tears and injecting gas into the eye to flatten the retina would work. It didn't and several weeks later I underwent a 'buckle' operation, sealing the all the thirteen tears and a vestectomy (removing some of the fluid or jelly from the eye). This worked and I have gone for regular examinations since.

The retinal surgeon was concerned about my other eye since apparently cataract and retinal surgery almost dictate that the other eye will go the same way. I was due for a check up on March 25th but on Saturday March 15th (remember the Ides) Valerie and I headed for Emergency in Hotel Dieu. Our first involvement with the health care system beyond our doctor's office for a couple of years.

All organizations run by rules and the Emergency Department was no exception. The normal process is for the emerg. department to refer you after a preliminary exam, to the ophthalmology clinic at 8.30 a.m. on the next day, Sunday.

Hey, I was surprised that there would be a clinic on Sunday with the retinal surgeon on call, so we left for home to return the next morning. This was OK with me since were to attend a St. Patrick's party that night where we enjoyed ourselves with other true Irish or those who wished they were.

I won't bore you with all the details except to outline my Sunday. Examination by two residents in Ophthalmology, then the surgeon, then being entered in the

queue for an emergency operation which occurred about 2.30 p.m. after the A cases were completed and being inserted as a B (probably non life threatening - I didn't ask!) before the Cs (probably elective like gall bladder - but I didn't ask!) and was admitted to a private room to spend the night after the operation.

We left for home on Monday after the examination by the surgeon to return the following Thursday. On Thursday it was discovered that one of the eight tears was still leaking so we had the second procedure of laser and gas bubble injection to return the following Tuesday. In the meantime I had to stay in bed on my left side and when up to hold my head down looking at my feet. Kind friends loaned me some talking books which made these restrictions boring. Everything now seems to be healing well and hopefully life will soon get back to normal.

Did I learn anything - Yes I did! It seems to me that our health care system is working well. Of course you have to wait since we're not running a McDonalds with everything pre-cooked, a limited choice and very little service. I also had an insight when registering for my room. The hospital has a sign on the wall that said:-

Daily room rate	\$1,055
Semi-private +	170
Private +	225

I have absolutely no quarrel with the rates when you consider the cost of facilities, equipment and staff. My concern is that we, who perceive health care to be a right and in effect free, need to appreciate the costs involved and perhaps modify some of our demands or ask the Government to increase our individual taxes to pay for it.

As I said to Valerie, 'I wonder if most people realize that you can go to the Caribbean or Mexico for a full week all inclusive for the price of one day private accommodation in our hospitals. I also was reminded of the fact that staff in our health facilities are well trained, efficient, effective and conscientious in carrying out their duties even though it might be 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Another thing I learned, while my head was bowed was a better understanding of a story I was told many, many years ago. It happened that a young man one day looking down at the curb found a envelope with no markings on it. On looking inside he discovered a \$20 bill. He was so overjoyed that from that day on for the rest of his life he never looked up, just gazed at his feet in hopes of finding more. When he was near death an old friend dropped in to chat with him and during their conversation became aware that this old man had never seen trees bursting into bloom in the spring, birds feeding their young in their nests, young lovers hand in hand by the lake filled with love for each other, changes in his neighbours houses

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