



# CLATTER ~~IDLE CHATTER~~

## LAST IDLE CLATTER

It had been my intention to continue writing this column through Issue 100 and then quietly retire at age 77. I thought of that as quitting as a winner. It didn't quite work out that way.

As I was completing my work on Issue 97, I began having some discomfort in my chest. I contacted fellow TDR member and longtime friend Dr. Bill Patterson, who is a Cardiologist in Sevierville, Tennessee, who set up an appointment for a stress test and angiogram. If you ever need his help, contact his nurse, Tirree, who keeps Bill headed in the right direction at all times, at 865-446-9575. Tell her you are a TDR member.

Of course the tests showed a problem with four arteries, the worst of which was 90 percent blocked. Bill promptly shipped me off to Parkwest Hospital in nearby Knoxville for bypass surgery performed by Dr. Mike Maggert. I came through the surgery just fine. Bill said I almost waited too long to get help. I'll always owe him for his timely intervention and immediate actions.

Ten days later, at a rehab facility while exercising, I lost all feeling in my hips, legs, and feet. I also lost any control of the bowel and bladder. I was sent back to Parkwest Hospital for tests that showed I had suffered a stroke of the spinal column. The official name is a spinal column infarct, which means that there was a temporary loss of blood supply to a small portion of the spinal column that killed or damaged some nerve endings. Such strokes are very rare, but I guess it was my turn.

I was then sent to the Patricia Neal rehab facility in Knoxville where they specialize in rehabilitation of spinal cord injuries like mine. They were able to restore hip, leg, and feet function to a certain point. Restoring good control of bladder and bowel function will probably take a year.

The place is named for Patricia Neal who members of a certain age will remember as a famous Hollywood movie star. She was a Knoxville native who gave back to her community by sponsoring this rehab facility and willed her fortune to it to ensure its lasting presence.

When I arrived there, I was pretty well bummed out, not much caring what happened to me. I was having my own "pity party." The staff has seen this before and quickly got me started on therapy in a large room where many other patients were hard at work. I quickly realized that most everybody else in the room had bigger problems than me. That ended the pity party and got my butt into gear. Time for Jim to go to work. If they can do it against bigger odds, I can too.

I'll never forget one little guy named Chuck with a sunny disposition who was working nearby on building his upper body strength while two therapists were holding me up so I could take my first steps. Chuck was encouraging me and rooting for me to be successful. 'Ya see, Chuck was in a wheelchair and will be for the rest of his life, never to be able to walk again. I can now walk for Chuck.

I then went to another rehab facility in Louisville, Tennessee, for continuing exercise for another month. They taught me new ways of doing household tasks that would work around my limitations. They got me repaired enough to be able to go home and take care of myself, since I live alone.

After being gone for 2-1/2 months, home sure looked good when I arrived there on August 14th!

I am not breathing well, likely a side result of the stroke, and have lost about 35 pounds of weight. Goals are to improve breathing and gain back some weight. My blood chemistry is still way out of the normal range, and I am very anemic. An Oncologist is testing me to determine what needs to be done, so I'm not free of doctors and needles yet. My kitchen table has enough pill bottles on it to qualify as a country pharmacy.

What of the future? Since it can now take me forever to accomplish the simplest tasks, it is a full time job just taking care of myself. I have retired from the Turbo Diesel Register as a writer although I do want to continue as a TDR member. I've made many TDR friends over my 19 year tenure and do want to keep in touch as I highly value these friendships. Most of all, I'll keep in touch with Robert and Robin Patton who run the TDR. 'Ya see, Robert actually believed I could write and manage a column all those years ago when our relationship began. He turned out to be right, but it took a while for me to grow into it!

I have been spending the last 11 winters in central Florida where I own a lot in a beautiful RV park. I will sell my place there since I can't negotiate the steps to even get into the RV. Anybody want a "priced right" deal on a nice fifth-wheel trailer and lot?

At home in the Smoky Mountains of east Tennessee I am surrounded by neighbors, friends and my children who have been only too happy to pitch in and help me when needed. I'll make good use of my remaining time, and won't have a problem staying busy and developing a social life. Fortunately, I am able to safely drive a car locally, but I can't get into one of today's tall trucks.

There is a local East Tennessee expression that is used when friends part—See 'Ya, Bye.

**Jim Anderson**  
(retired) TDR Writer