

Inquiring Minds: July 17 has my doctors testing, but I have a plan.

#69 Aug-Sept /23 "Life's a learning experience, only if you learn." –Yogi Berra -more [quotes on anything](#)

Issues 2011-23: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [9](#) [10](#) [11](#) [12](#) [13](#) [14](#) [15](#) [16](#) [17](#) [18](#) [19](#) [20](#) [21](#) [22](#) [23](#) [24](#) [25](#) [26](#) [27](#) [28](#) [29](#) [30](#) [31](#) [32](#) [33](#) [34](#) [35](#)
[36](#) [37](#) [38](#) [39](#) [40](#) [41](#) [42](#) [43](#) [44](#) [45](#) [46](#) [47](#) [48](#) [49](#) [50](#) [51](#) [52](#) [53](#) [54](#) [55](#) [56](#) [57](#) [58](#) [59](#) [60](#) [61](#) [62](#) [63](#) [64](#) [65](#) [66](#) [67](#) [68](#)

Two months after my only ride in an ambulance and \$86,000 worth of tests at Kaiser, no one is quite sure what happened on that warm July 17 morning after we all decided to stop playing tennis. I was lucky my playing my partners included Elias, a retired MD, and that Dave knew to call 911 after I had difficulty walking to my truck. Also that the attending paramedics in the firetruck and the ambulance were in constant contact with the cardiologist at Sequoia Hospital, and that we were only 15 minutes away. And later that Senior Advantage Medicare and my excellent health plan picked up almost all of the related costs.

I was absolutely in no pain, was mentally alert, and surprisingly calm enough to be a keen observer of what was happening which seemed so interesting. I felt a bit embarrassed by all the fuss being made over me and that as I was probably soaked with perspiration. (I recalled my mom's warning about always wearing clean underwear, just in case...). I was more concerned about not losing my valuables in the shuffle, how to get my truck home before security closed and locked the gate, whether my wife could still handle the stick shift without hitting the garage door, and so on...

I was surprisingly calm, I submitted to what was happening to me both in the ambulance and in the ER. Hands were stripping off my clothes, cleaning, and intubating my arms to receive both fluids (for possible heat stroke) and the large gage catheter in my right wrist artery to accept the 16 gauge mini-cam to view my heart when in the ER. I was a little mildly self conscious that I probably reeked some from playing an hour and a half of tennis, but these professionals had seen worse, and they had a job to do. The thought of my mom often telling her five children to wear clean underwear *just in case* brought a brief unexplained smile to my lips.

Once in the ER I was met by a bevy of 6 or 7 support staff who all had jobs to do: washing and prepping me for surgery if I needed it, taking my vitals, and asking me questions, and making small talk to relax me. Things got serious when Dr. Tomiaki Hinohara entered and worked the mini scope up my arm. I could see my heart beating on a large flat screen to my left with all sorts of other information being collected by the various electrodes attached to my chest. They knew more about me than I knew about myself.

After a few hours or so I was moved to a room they had prepared for me. Patricia met me there, and I noticed that in the confusion, somehow my tennis bag which had my rackets, wallet, keys, and prescription sunglasses had been left in the ER, which was in use. Patricia had no trouble parking my truck—and I didn't tell her about my [Walter Mitty](#) imaginings. I had great numbers from all the various tests,

and spent the night being monitored, and trying to sleep, wired up like a robotic man. No reason for her to stay.

I was released the next day at 2 pm, and located my personal belongings after constantly reminding the unit nurses and staff to do so. Re my medical condition, on a one-page abstract I was said to have "[a benign coronary-myocardial bridge](#)" which made it look like I was having a heart problem. The young Primary Care Physician (PCP) who would write the report said it would be sent to my cardiologist Dr. Alex Chen at Kaiser, and that I could get a copy from him.

My primary doctor at Kaiser, Elizabeth Chang, wanted to pursue this condition since new data showed it wasn't a heart attack or a stroke. She has been giving me a whole slew of tests to look for other culprits. So far all seems normal but more to come—including a just scheduled second pacemaker test. We shall see. Still more tests to come.

My take so far: Poor vision in one eye makes it difficult for me to see a fast-moving tennis or pickle ball, and my competitive instinct has me working more than most. Shoulder pain is also speaking to me. The thrill is gone, and I am not happy with the self I am becoming on the court. Ergo, I have to cut back on the tennis, especially on hot days, and go to less demanding activities I enjoy such as: walking, hiking, biking, and golfing on smaller courses. That plus good diet, sleep, and good hydration, will make my life more happy, wholesome, and fun again. Amen!

I am grateful: **1)** for this wakeup call, **2)** for my being in relatively good health and having fairly healthy habits, diet, and medicine in my life, **3)** for being surrounded by great medical facilities within easy driving distance, **4)** for having a spouse who is an RN who knows what questions to ask, and has the respect of Kaiser staff where she worked for 37 years, including cardiac care as a young nurse. **5)** for an excellent medical plan for retired Belmont teachers; **6)** for Medicare with Senior Advantage. True, this varies hospital to hospital, doctor to doctor; but I am fortunate to be so lucky, and I wish the same for others who do not have such coverage. **7)** for a greater compassion and understanding of my family, friends, and others who have had serious medical problems—with some survivor's guilt that I have had such good life so far. **8)** for becoming more focused because of my minor disabilities and more at peace with my mortality. As tennis buddy Jack Farmer said several months before he passed, "I have had a very good life, and I have no regrets, and as **Woody Allen once said, 'I am not afraid of dying—I just don't want to be there when it happens.'**"

[Watch Jack speak at his own Celebration of life.](#) *Peace, Joe B.*