

In Praise of Old Ladies Pushing Wheeled Walkers

Posted on [October 9, 2014](#) by [TheContentBloke](#)



Some years ago I had a job hefting cartons of wine off palettes and plunking them on a conveyor belt. One fateful Friday, I plunked when I should have hefted and pain ripped through my back like a biker gang mowing down a marching band.

I spent the weekend hobbling around my house, clutching a broom handle to keep myself upright. Upright in a stooped kind of way. On a positive note, I became well acquainted with areas of my carpet I'd missed when I last did the vacuuming.

My back eventually made a partial recovery. I could still do the odd bit of heavy lifting but not for long periods without wishing I was bobbing for apples in a barrel of morphine.

After easing up on the lifting for a while, and with the last bout of pain a distant memory, I started to think my back was 100 percent and I could handle weighty objects like I did in my carton-hefting heyday.

An 80-pound rock in my front garden soon crushed the life out of that delusion.

My back now a masochist's multiple orgasm, I had no choice but to return to the hobbling and the broom handle clutching.

When Coke Calls

My plan was to stay indoors for a few days until the pain subsided. But I had a problem: my fridge needed restocking.

I didn't have a car, which meant I had to walk to the supermarket. Getting there unassisted, though, would be like trying to navigate the Cape of Good Hope in an iron lung. While the broom was OK for inside the house, it couldn't get me to and from my destination unless I flew on it and, in my condition, jumping off the roof was out of the question.

All seemed lost.

And then I saw it.

My late mother's wheeled walker.

I knew my street cred was about to die a horrible death, but I didn't care, because I needed a Coca-Cola fix something fierce. I needed some other items too, and the walker had a wire basket that would save me having to lug it all.

An Uneasy Wheeling

This was going to be no easy trek. The hammering vibrations that shot up through the walker's frame into my wrists and forearms when I negotiated my cobblestone driveway soon told me that, though they were nothing compared to the brutal jolts I copped when I tackled my first curb. By the time I'd covered a block, I felt as if I'd been king-hit by the Great Pyramid.

I wanted to do a one-eighty and head back home, but my raging caffeine addiction said, "No. You've come this far, don't stop now."

For the next half-hour, I groaned and grimaced as the walker, which I'm certain was possessed by Satan, transferred the jarring vibration from every bump, hole, dip, and irregularity in the pavement into my body, magnifying it tenfold. I wondered how little old ladies could endure this torture day in, day out. They were tougher men than I.

As I staggered into the main drag of the shopping center, an elderly woman seated at a table outside a café, wheeled walker by her side, nodded at me. I nodded back. We were like two Vietnam veterans wordlessly acknowledging the horror and fraternity of war.

Is It a Bird? Is It a Plane? It's a Supermarket!

The supermarket's smooth floor gave my smarting muscles instant and desperately needed relief. But it was short lived. When I bent down to pick up a pack of baking soda, I won the pain lottery. And every time I picked up another item, I won it all over again.

My mind tumbled into delirium. I was no longer in a supermarket. I was in Scientology's L.A. headquarters, watching Kirstie Alley perform an unspeakable act on John Travolta with a penis-shaped E-meter, while a 103-year-old L. Ron Hubbard circuited the building in an open-top flying saucer, shouting, "Didn't you people get my message? This is total BS!"

I got out of the supermarket as fast as I slowly could.

The Agony and the More Agony

The journey home took a day short of forever. The pain in my back wasn't as severe as before, but the pain in my wrists and forearms had worsened and the only way to ease it was to slow from a crawl to a lunch-hour bank queue.

Finally I arrived at my front door. As I struggled to get the walker over the stoop, which had risen ten feet in my absence, somebody—I didn't see who—plunged a set of steak knives into my back.

I entered the house with all the grace of Quasimodo bounding up a downward moving escalator.

With a breathless wuff, I collapsed on a living room chair, back arching from the searing impact. Thankfully, relief came quickly. Contemplation came shortly thereafter. I spared a thought for all the dear old souls who had to get around with wheeled walkers. Never again would I march obliviously past them. No, I would stand at attention and salute them with a tear in my eye.

I chuckled. In spite of the pain and exhaustion, I had emerged triumphant from my terrible ordeal. I had defeated that devilish instrument of torture. I had been to hell and back with a bad back, yet I would live to hobble and grimace another day.

The chuckle became a hearty laugh, the laugh of a victor, a winner, a champion, a legend.

Then it suddenly occurred to me.

I'd forgotten the Coke.