**Appendicitis! (from 1955)**

It was an ordinary day at Toluca Lake Elementary School. I had ridden my bicycle to school, placed it in the student lot, and went to the far corner of the school to my 6th grade class with Mr. Trott. My stomach started feeling a bit queasy on the trip to school and it kept getting worse. At about 10 AM, I raised my hand in class and suggested that I be excused. Since this was abnormal for me, Mr. Trott said that I should go visit the school nurse office in the main building. He also selected another student to escort me over there. I made it to the two step porch outside the bungalow, and immediately deposited the contents of my stomach on the playground right over the railing. I did not feel very good at all; I leaned heavily on the fellow student across the asphalt playground to the nurse office. The nurse suggested that I visit the doctor, but I could not because there was no transportation. My mother was at work and did not drive anyway. My father was at his job downtown (about an hour away). The principal, Francis Grinnell, understood my home situation and immediately took me into her car, went to pick up my mother from work, and went to the local doctor that I had seen before.

The doctor immediately took some blood for a blood test and pushed in on my lower right side of my abdomen. That was no problem at all…until he suddenly let go of the pressure and I literally screamed with pain. The blood test came back with very high white blood cell count. The doctor said I needed to go to the hospital immediately because of possible appendicitis. Mrs. Grinnell then took my mother and me directly to the nearest hospital, and dropped us there. The doctor cancelled all appointments and went there as well. After some discussion, it was decided that I needed an appendectomy immediately.

They put me on a gurney, changed the operating room schedule, and I was in surgery. Somebody said count to 10; I did not make it that far. I woke up two hours later with the awful taste of ethyl ether in my mouth, a bad headache, and a very sore abdomen that I was not to touch. The doctor was looking at me and said that was the largest appendix that he had ever removed from a patient. He was surprised that the appendix had not burst and speculated that it was very close to doing that inside of me which would have resulted in a serious internal infection and some very bad side effects. At that time, there was some high probability of my being a fatality with that kind of infection spread about the abdominal cavity. They decided to place the appendix in a jar and use it for a medical school sample.

I still have the 6 inch long scar diagonally on my lower right side from the operation. It matches the 6 inch long diagonal scar on my left side from the undescended testicle and inguinal hernia from 5 years earlier. My parents were happy to see me moving after the surgery, but I had to stay in the hospital for three days. I suppose that I recovered rapidly at that age because I remember whizzing down the hallways in my wheelchair; the hospital decided that I should go home on a Friday night since my parents would be home for the weekend, and rest for a week. In particular: NO bicycle riding, or any other abdominal stress activity. My upcoming Little League baseball season was ruined. Oh well, wait until next year. *(Isn’t that a tradition in baseball?)* Sometime later, I returned to school on my bicycle, riding slowly. Mr. Trott and Mrs. Grinnell were glad to see me.