

The Mechanics of Thought

By Pete Clark

The older I get, the more I seem to be falling apart. As if carrying around chunks of titanium and some dead guys bones aren't enough, my taste buds have gone bad. My doctor peered into my gaping mouth, referred to my medical records and told me my problem is due to the steroid inhaler, Pulmacort. She said Pulmacort promotes the growth of bacteria near the junction of my windpipe and esophagus. The bacteria in turn are changing the chemistry of my digestive system at its entry point. Thus, for some reason, unless everything contains tomatoes or tomato products food tastes like I am sucking on a piece of galvanized tin. Yuck! On the positive side, I have lost weight due to this condition. I am hoping my weight loss remains positive.

To add insult to injury, a month or so ago, my right elbow, which of its own volition decided to grow an extra part, put an end to my shoulder rotation exercises by causing sharp pains to shoot along the inside of my right forearm. Whoopee! But the best was yet to come. A muscle in my neck on the left side became sensitive. If I moved my head a little to the right, a sharp pain would shoot up covering the left rear quarter of my skull. This situation did not bother me too much until one of the surges of horrific pain went as far as my left temple. I fear nothing, but that scared the hell out of me.

I didn't bother my PCP with any of these irritations as I was a few days away from an appointment with the orthopedic surgeon who is keeping tabs on my left shoulder and right elbow. After I arrived in the doctor's office I gave him my laundry list of ills and aches and he poked, prodded, bent and gave me the Third Degree, informing me that my body is an arthritis making machine. The doctor ordered x-rays and attended to other matters while the pictures were created.

The doctor came back into his office and brought up my x-rays and sat there mumbling about how I should be in severe pain every minute of the day. Next he turned to me and said, "Don't let the spinal guys see your x-rays, or they will want to put steel rods everywhere." He said the pain in the left side of my neck was arthritic.

Looking at the x-rays I noticed something that I did not mention to the doctor. There were three fairly large dark spots which formed an isosceles triangle on the back of my skull. Inside these dark spots, I could see little gears and strips of something with cogs on them. There were drill presses, conveyor belts and little stamping machines visible in those dark patches and finally I knew that my mother had been wrong so many years ago. When I was a snotty nosed kid with an oversized mouth she had told that all I had on the top of my neck was pumpkin shell full of muddy water. I kid you not.