

Cold Connections

By Pete Clark

One morning in the early Nineties I was in the computer room of Colorado Healthcare, pulling a piece of network cabling down from above the ceiling to be connected to a port on the back of the mainframe. Standing on a ladder I stretched my arms up into the hole in the ceiling created by moving one of the acoustic panels. As I began to pull the cable from its storage space, something gave way in my left shoulder, rendering that arm useless. I was sent to Rose Medical Center where, after being examined, my arm was put into an uncomfortable sling, and I was sent home.

The next morning, I saw my PCP and he put me into a much more comfortable belt with a Velcro strap to hold my arm in place. Later that day I walked to 6th Avenue and caught a bus to Colorado Boulevard to connect with a bus going past Colorado Boulevard and Mexico where our building was located. That night when I was ready to leave I crossed the street to catch a bus back to 6th Avenue. My pickup was in the parking garage at work, but it was a stick shift and I could not drive it with one hand. The eastbound bus had gone past the bus stop at 6th and Colorado a few minutes before I arrived there.

I had a problem. At that time of night, buses ran once per hour on 6th Avenue and the temperature was below zero. To add to the misery of the situation, that section of East 6th Avenue was an exclusive area where ugly things like benches at bus stops could not exist. Because of my arm being tied to my abdomen I could not completely zip up my coat so I paced back and forth for most of an hour to keep my blood circulating. I grew up in Central Wyoming and had experienced temperatures that made this sub-zero situation seem like a sunny spring afternoon, but those memories did not keep me warm. It would be a cold week and a half before I could again drive my stick shift to and from work.

I could have taken time off while my shoulder healed enough to have my arm unfettered, but I am not built that way. I have always had to be at death's door before I would miss work due to illness or injury. When the going gets tough, the stupid get going and I am no exception. I could have asked Norma to pick me up after work, but she had a day job that required much effort and she had no business being out in the cold in the middle of the night driving on slick streets.

I still have problems with my left shoulder. The foundation for those problems was laid more than fifty years ago, but that circumstance has been told in another story and isn't worth repetition.