

A Healing View

by Liz Gibbons

My husband, Vic, did not want a funeral after his death in December 2013, but our sons, his large family, and I wanted to have some kind of celebration of his life. Finally, since so many relatives lived or summered in Michigan, we arranged a family gathering the following August in Charlevoix. His family had moved there in the mid-1940s. The weather that weekend was perfect; sunny and warm.

I added some unexpected drama. As I was leaving the church on Sunday morning following a mass said for Vic, my attention was drawn to the adjacent school building where our family luncheon was to be served. I did not notice there was a step down as I exited the church. I lost my balance and fell. The two doctors in the family did not think I had broken anything as I was able to walk with support from one of my sons. Feeling a little shaky, I did my part in the luncheon celebration and at the cemetery where Vic's ashes were buried in one of the family plots. We returned to the summer home of Vic's older brother, Jim, and his wife, Christel. As the afternoon progressed I was in increasing pain and went to the hospital to check it out. The neck of the head of the femur was fractured, so instead of flying back to Atlanta on Monday I was in the hospital getting that part of my hip replaced.

The Charlevoix Hospital is fairly new and is located on the shore of Lake Michigan. Most of the patient rooms look out on the lake. I was placed in a spacious room with two beds but had no roommate. I asked the nurse to turn my bed 90 degrees so that its head was on the side wall and I could look out the window to see the lake. What a beautiful view. The lake shore was about two hundred feet beyond the back of the hospital. That evening there was a gorgeous sunset over the lake. On Monday as I waited for surgery I watched the waves gently lap on the shore. Sailboats could often be seen in the distance as well as an occasional lake freighter. Speed boats bounced over the waves closer to the shore. The view was calming and uplifting.

The next morning, with the aid of a walker, I began walking the halls several times a day. That morning the weather had turned cooler and rainy. The lake was churning with energy, and frothy white caps swirled across the lake surface before crashing on the shore. It was fascinating to watch. By midafternoon the stormy weather had abated, and I began to see some pleasure boats. Again, there was a beautiful sunset.

On Wednesday I added a physical therapy session. The therapist was amazed at how well I was doing. I was dismissed after lunch on Thursday and spent six days at a private assisted living home, then a day with Jim and Christel at their home by the lake. I had progressed from using a walker to just using a cane. Jim drove me to the Traverse City airport the next morning, Thursday, and I flew to Detroit and then on to Atlanta, ten days after my surgery. I believe the beauty of the lake was instrumental in my speedy recovery.