

Second and Final Version.

First 2010 Bison News Article, by Tom Barthel WC 1133 2/1/2010

Title; **It has been a fine winter at Snake River Farm.**

Good snow but not the excess that some of you have had. The tractors start when I need them. The bison have been easy to care for.

We've rendered over 150 pounds of pure hog lard for our customers. Made sausage for our family. Spent a lot of time with grandkids but still have found plenty of time to read and to write. Saturday I hitched three mustangs to the big bobsled. Mustangs love to run. In good snow, they give their own meaning to the term "wild ride".

I haven't done as much bobsledding as I would like. I have been doing some convalescing, which is where the time for reading and writing comes in.

I've had some down time because I had my knees replaced this winter.

I had my knees replaced because of Dave Beckstrand. You all know Dave. He is the big, competent guy who does a lot of work for the association along with his wife Sue. Dave chairs the Promotions and Education Committee, among other things. And no, it's not what you're thinking. Dave and I get along fine. He didn't break my knees.

It's more a matter of the knee thing being Dave's idea.

Well maybe not so much his idea but he brought it up. Dave had his knees replaced last winter and he spoke very highly of it. Dave told me that not only did it improve his stride and reduce pain but the dual ten-inch scars were a great conversation opener around the pool. I have a hard time believing that last part.

My knees were replaced because of advanced osteoarthritis. (They were just worn out.) In my case, osteoarthritis was propelled along by a split pelvis that occurred because of staying too long on a bucking horse. Now if you just read that I was bucked off a horse, read the sentence again. I stayed too long on a bucking horse. The difference may seem trivial to you but it is enormous to me. I'm not claiming I have never been bucked off a horse, I sure have. I'm saying that I never had to go to the hospital from getting bucked off a horse. I was hospitalized for staying too long on a bucking horse.

The bucking incident involved a Mustang stallion and a mare in heat but that is another story.

I'm trying to get to me knees here and we're still a couple of joints away.

During the bucking incident, my pelvis split open, down the front. You can picture that.

A less violent form of this injury can occur to woman during a hard childbirth.

The injury cannot be corrected easily; my waist size went up two inches instantly and never came back.

The increased pelvic diameter misaligned the ball and socket joints of my hips. My hips needed to be replaced ten years after the bucking-horse incident

The hip replacements work fine but because of the misalignment, it was only a matter of time before my knees needed replacement also. This winter was that time.

Knee replacement is an elective surgery of course. I decided to follow Dave's lead and have it done in the "off" season.

My surgeon and I have had a good relationship over the years. He does careful work and I trust his medical judgment. He's a southern Minnesota farm boy to boot. Even so, I fear that commercial interests may be tainting our relationship. After all these years of orthopedic work, he has to recognize me as a revenue stream. Certainly his accountant does.

As we chatted in my hospital room following the second knee surgery he asked questions about my remaining joints that made me uneasy. It occurred to me that he might still have a son in college. I told him right out, I don't intend to have any more joints replaced.

During a November pre-op visit my surgeon pointed out that I wasn't as tall as I used to be. I've never been tall but I was once well over five feet seven. Well, five feet seven and $\frac{1}{4}$ to be exact. Those quarters matter if you are vertically challenged as I am. It's similar to saying you are ten and "a half" years old when that's all you are.

Like many short guys I wouldn't mind being taller.

During that pre-op visit he mentioned in an off-hand manner that rebuilding the joints would increase my height. He said that I could gain a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch or so in height with the new knees. Some of that would be the obvious replacement of joint elements that no longer exist. He said that bringing my knees back toward the medial line of my body would help also.

Well, what he said exactly was, "When I replace those knees you won't be so bowlegged".

Funny how a thing like that can sneak up on a guy. I hadn't noticed it before he pointed it out.

Somewhere in the discussion my surgeon casually mentioned that he might be able to add a little to my height by setting the cuts in particular ways and by taking a little care with spacing etc.

The casual attitude on his part was probably related to the fact that he is about six foot three. I haven't seen a study on this but I'm pretty certain that the subject of height has a lot more meaning to a guy that is five foot six than to someone who is six foot three. It then occurred to me that we should have talked about this much earlier. Even before he replaced my hips.

I guess enthusiasm took over at some point during that discussion and perhaps I tried to go too far. He was emphatic that he could not make me as tall as Dave. Dave is probably six feet four.

He then confessed under direct questioning that he could have added to my height during hip replacement. Well, it is much too late for that now. He defended his negligence by saying that the American Association of Orthopedic Surgeons frowns on such enhancement procedures.

Apparently there are old case reports from somewhere in Eastern Europe, Transylvania I believe, that turned out very badly for all parties involved.

Well the new knees are working fine. Please do not show surprise or stare when you see the taller version of me at our next meeting.

And don't ask to see my scars. I am not showing them around.

Ask Dave. He might show his.

See you at the Spring Conference in Rochester. Connie and Jim Stannard are working to assure a grand meeting.

Tom