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Constance Gave Me My Life Back



Brenda Cronin, WSJ Associate Editorial Features Editor, November 28, 2023

The pandemic was terrible, but it had its silver linings. Mine came early, in the pre-lockdown twilight.

As Covid began to spread through New York City, with appalling timing, I fractured my hip on March 5, 2020. It was repaired the next morning with two pins and a titanium rod. The staffer discharging me said my post-op regimen included a daily injection for a month.

Being wary of needles, I found the notion of poking one into my stomach for 30 consecutive days as preposterous as performing my own orthopedic surgery. But I lived alone and with the world closing down, faraway family couldn't fly in, and friends had their own obligations and medical concerns.

The hospital suggested a [visiting nurse](#), which sounded like care better suited to someone twice my age. I foggily agreed, however, and two days later Constance Evans showed up at my apartment. Constance—after a long commute in protective gear aboard an empty train—was sunny and optimistic. She examined my leg, which was swollen to the size of a linebacker's, and observed: "You got hit with a ton of bricks. But we're going to take those bricks and build something beautiful and strong."

We got talking and I don't even remember her giving me the first injection. But I recall vividly that as I healed and progressed from bed to walker to cane, the highlight of my day was Constance's visit. It seldom lasted long but in 15 minutes she imparted enough company, care and conversation to restore a wobbly world to an even keel. She was cheerful and uncomplaining, seemingly unfazed by the pandemic's risks and inconveniences. She had patients to see and a virus wasn't going to stop her.

When I finally could hobble outside on a walker, I was shocked at how dismal the city was, with churches and gyms closed and sidewalks empty. Constance breezed through every morning and brought such spirit and life indoors that I was unaware of the pall over the world.

On her days off, another nurse would come, each one pleasant and solicitous. But there was only one Constance.

The recovery was tedious and I never lost my phobia about injections. On the morning of her final visit, Constance arrived with a bouquet of spring flowers. "It's your graduation day," she said. I think of Constance when I come across such pandemic reminders as a crumpled mask in a coat pocket or dots on church pews and arrows on shop floors indicating where to sit or stand.

Recently I found my Covid-19 Vaccination Record Card, documenting my first shot and several boosters. I wonder if some day these artifacts will be auctioned to collectors seeking mementos of a once-in-a-century event. According to the card, I had my first vaccine on March 1, 2021, at the same hospital where, almost a year earlier I arrived in an ambulance with a smashed leg. I got my Pfizer shot and skipped out of the vaccine center feeling invincible.

The broken hip is now a memory so distant I have to check for the scar to remember which leg had been damaged. I've never tested positive for Covid. And, thanks to the aptly named Constance, I got my life back.

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