

*(This was written in 2014 in anger after my (then) doctor refused to listen to me and arrange for a cortizone injection in my knee. Told me everything was worn out. It was worn out 60 years ago! I sacked him!)*

## Story of a "Pig-headed So-and-So!" – Me!

I contracted Polio at age 15!

When I went back to work (age 16) I had a journeyman tell me I was a "pig-headed so-and-so". After thinking about it, I went back and told him I agreed with him.

My right leg was wasted and I walked with a slight limp and, every now and then, would collapse with intense chest pain.

I went back to outpatients for treatment, and after about an hour or so walked out telling them their treatment was going to leave me a cripple for life as they insisted on forcing the muscles.

As I reached the entrance, the hospital administrator was waiting (they must have called ahead). He looked down his nose at me and said: "You walk out that door now, don't come back!" I looked him up and down and told him I wasn't coming back to have him cripple me.

The "pig-headed so-and-so" strikes again!

I lived at Coogee Bay in Sydney and swam every morning across the bay between the two points. Being new to Sydney I didn't know I was swimming out in some of the (then) most shark infested water around Sydney. Maybe the sharks took pity on me and let me be, as I never saw any.

However, the result was that within 12 months of this plodding along in the ocean, the leg had filled out until, instead of 4" difference, there was only ¼" difference between the two legs. When my GP told the hospital, their answer was: "oh, well, he couldn't have had polio."

I guess I was ahead of the times...I had used a huge hydrotherapy pool to build the muscles back up.

I still had my battles. Every so often I would collapse with intense pain in my chest; so severe I could not breathe. Lying on the ground, trying not to breathe because of the intense pain it caused, I would eventually start to black out. Once this happened, the muscles would relax, easing the pain, and I would start breathing again. Doctors couldn't tell me what was wrong, just that it was not heart.

At age 33 this happened in a doctor's surgery and he tracked the chest pain around the rib-cage to the neck.

He had my back and neck areas all x-rayed and told me there was nothing he could do for me as I had extremely severe osteoarthritis all through me. He told me I was "an old man young" and that I should expect to be in a nursing home within around 2 years.

Great! Not long married with a new house, a 25-year mortgage and a new baby!

However, this "pig-headed so-and-so" was not about to give up. Unable to keep at my old trade because of the severe pain that would spread from my neck out through the shoulder muscles, causing loss of use of my right arm, I decided to do something different. We bought a citrus orchard!

The thought being that when the pain got to severe doing one thing I could go and do something else

until it settled. This worked to some extent, but to extend the orchard we grew trellised tomatoes – 5000 vines at a time; 15,000 through the season – as a quick cash crop through summer before fruit picking and packing commenced.

This “pig-headed so-and-so” would crawl along those rows on hands and knees and simply lay in the dirt every so often while the pain eased.

A year after moving onto the orchard I went to an osteopath who worked on my back for 12 months, slowly straightening out the spine. This straightened me up, got rid of the limp, but not the pain.

A year later I underwent a series of radical operations on my back that, although not successful on the lower back, did get rid of the worst of the pain in my neck area.

After 6 years we had developed the orchard into a show place and sold it for 4 times what we paid.

We moved to Western Australia where I chose a Doctor Michael Chin as my GP. At first he didn't seem to take me seriously. However, after viewing x-rays of my back his attitude changed. He said he could do little except try and control the pain when it got too bad.

This he did for the next 28-odd years until he couldn't save himself from cancer. He gave me the freedom to enjoy life...sailing, water-skiing, golf, etc, etc, knowing, as often happened, when I got myself into trouble, he could patch me up with cortisone. Marvellous stuff, that!

What, apparently, was not well known was that the damage from the polio gave a false impression of osteoarthritis. Polio caused a rapid degeneration of the cartilage between the joints, as well as enormous nerve damage throughout the body.

Hence the mistaken diagnosis by the Sydney doctor.

At 84 (2018) I have no sign of osteoporosis and don't believe I have much of any arthritis in me. In fact my bones have always seemed indestructible and, believe me, I have given them plenty of testing!

Cortisone (in the hands of Dr Michael Chin) had been my saviour and I miss him badly, both as a doctor and a friend.

Since his death I have had many injections in the spine, all of which have failed to give anything but very short, temporary relief.

When my hip got bad I was told by all and sundry that it was coming from my back. I wouldn't accept this as I knew the difference between the pain from my back and neck and the pain from a small piece of inflamed tissue. The back may have caused it, but the pain was localized inflamed tissue. Michael Chin taught me the difference between the two.

So I persisted until a Dr Nadkarni agreed to inject cortisone where I said. It is now 5 years since and still not a single twinge of pain.

Being a “pig-headed so-and-so” does pay off – sometimes! At least it has kept me on my feet for the last 65+ years. If I had bowed to the hospital hierarchy and persisted with their treatment, I would most likely be getting around today with a wasted leg, a crooked spine and a limp (or, most likely, in a wheelchair).

If I had listened to the doctor when I was 33 and given up, I may well have spent my life needing nursing care.

It is now a number of years since I found another doctor who listened to me and injected cortisone into my knee and I have not had a trace of pain in it since.

**Heil the “pig-headed so-and-so”! He's not finished yet!**