

# Things that could only happen to Peck.

## Broken Neck

I was diagnosed with ALS in March 2015. In 2014, I had just had both knees replaced at the same time and was doing the physical therapy rehabilitation when I noticed that my left foot was dragging. I learned later that this symptom is what is known as dropped-foot.

Over the next few weeks, I started tripping on everything -rugs, cracks in concrete, my own feet, and everything else. I went to my orthopedic doctor and he said "It's not your knees. It is something else," so he sent me to a neurologist. After several tests and several neurologists, I was diagnosed with ALS. When four doctors come into the room with tearing eyes, it can't be good!

The tripping had gotten worse, so I started using my putter as a cane. One day I was walking out of my front door to go fishing with a soft ice chest in one hand and my putter in the other hand. I tripped headfirst onto the sidewalk and that hurt my neck a lot. Instead of going to the ER, I tried to sleep in a chair, but the pain was terrible. The next day my neck was still hurting a lot, so I went to the emergency room where X-rays determined that I had broken my neck.

People have been telling me that I was going to break my neck for years, but it took me 70 years to really do it. I stayed in the hospital seven days after surgery where they put steel in vertebrae's 1 and 2 of my neck. The doctors said most similar injuries result in being paralyzed.

I went through the healing process and physical therapy, but I never got my full range of motion back. I replaced the putter with a three-pronged cane, but I didn't stop falling. Four months after the surgery, I fell three times in two days. The first was in the bathroom while brushing my teeth. I lost my balance and fell backwards hitting my head on the tile shower bench. I was a little frazzled, so I laid down for little while with plans to go to work soon.

My wife and I started talking about a guy getting run over in the French quarter after the Alabama Clemson game. After while I was feeling better, so I left work. On the way to work, I thought to myself that I had forgotten to tell my wife this story about the guy getting run over in the French quarter, so I called her and told her the story again. She pointed out that I had already told her that story and I said, "Oh, well Okay, goodbye."

Later that day, I was at lunch with a good friend when I get a call from my boss. He said, "LeeAnn is in his office and they're taking me to the emergency room to get x-rays to make sure I was all right. The doctors saw that everything was in place but I was sore. So, the next day, my boss told me to stay home and rest my neck. I rested at home till noon. I felt my neck was okay, and I had been wanting to take some aerial photographs on the Mississippi River. I thought today would be a good day. *(continued)*



"So then.... you don't like life in the fast lane?"

I have been in helicopters many times because I take aerial photos of Lanier's engineering projects. When I got to the airport, I knew that it's always a good idea to go to the bathroom before getting into the helicopter. Well, I tripped 3-feet from the bathroom urinal and hit my head on the tile wall then fell to the floor. That hurt!

A man came in and saw me on the floor and asked if I was all right. I asked him to help me up and I felt a little groggy, but I proceeded with my cane out to the waiting helicopter. It so happened that the helicopter had mechanical problems and couldn't fly that day, which was fine with me. John, a coworker, and I left the airport to meet a construction contractor who was interested in doing work with our engineering company. We met at a restaurant called Drago's which was famous for their charbroiled oysters.

After lunch, I was scheduled to take John to the airport to catch a flight to Houston, but I had to go to the bathroom before we left the restaurant. On my way to the bathroom I tripped on one of their rugs and slammed my head into another tile wall. Some diners managed to help me get up, and I was able to make it out of the restaurant and drive John to the airport.

On the way back from the airport I was groggy again. I thought to myself, "Hitting your head three times in two days Is Way too Much." I knew that the cane was no longer working, and it was time for me to go to a walker.

I chalked it up to another lesson-learned in my journey in living with ALS.

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