

under the ozone hole



#19 - September 2007

SCIENCE FICTION NEWS

Recent audio analysis of a tape of Neil Armstrong's first words from the surface of the Moon reveal that Armstrong did in fact say "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." Until now, it seemed that Armstrong forgot the indefinite article before the word "man," which essentially made the sentence meaningless, although Armstrong has always insisted that he intended to say it.

Further analysis of the tape indicates that Armstrong also said, "C'mon, take at least one picture of me, you bastard," "There's the secret Martian base we're not supposed to mention over an open channel," and "Not now, Buzz, NASA can hear us."

The venerable *Star Trek* franchise recently celebrated the 40th anniversary of the first broadcast of its very first episode. It also recently celebrated the 38th anniversary of the first broadcast of its last good episode.

Speaking of *Star Trek*, *Alias* and *Lost* co-creator J.J. Abrams was recently named as writer, producer and director of the new *Star Trek* movie, planned for a 2008 release and rumoured to feature a young Kirk and Spock. When asked how he is approaching the complex *Trek* mythology for the film Abrams said, "We're going to treat it the same way we do the mysteries and

backstories on *Lost*. We're gonna to make it up as we go."

Another series from *Star Trek's* creator, the late Gene Roddenberry, is in the works. Much like *Gene Roddenberry's Andromeda* and *Gene Roddenberry's Earth: Final Conflict*, this new series will also be based on notes found by his estate. Slated to air soon, it will be called *Gene Roddenberry's Candy: 555-6042*.

Battlestar Galactica producer Ron Moore has revealed some plans for the fourth season. Kara will have Lee's baby, Helo will become addicted to painkillers, President Roslin will have an affair with Six, and Muffit will eat all the mushies.

Across the pond, the producers of the new *Doctor Who* were thrown for a loop when actor David Tennant abruptly quit the show, becoming the second Doctor to leave the show in as many years. The new Who is Roger Daltrey.

The 4400 will get a new title as it turns out that producers miscounted the number of extras they hired. The show will now be called *The 4402*.

Award-winning author Orson Scott Card is branching out into, surprisingly, the

realm of so-called "slash" fiction. He's writing a novel called *Ender on a Bender*, an *Ender/Futurama* cross-over.

George Lucas has decided to make some new *Star Wars* movies. But he's not going to make any sequels or prequels to the six previous movies, instead he's going to make more films that fit into the series. First up will be *Star Wars: Episode 1A: The Phantom Apology*, followed by a four-hour epic, *Star Wars: Episode 3A: The Long Drawn-out and Terribly Painful Death of Jar Jar Binks*.

This just in from Hollywood: former *Dallas* star Patrick Duffy was recently found in a shower. It turns out that the whole first season of *Man From Atlantis* was just a dream.

Researchers have recently uncovered a number of unpublished manuscripts by the late Isaac Asimov. Apparently Asimov had planned a series of books about home renovations that focused on basements to be called The Foundation Series. Books in the series were to be called *Cracks in the Foundation*, *Sealing the Foundation*, and *Repairing the Foundation*. A fourth undiscovered work, *Laying the Foundation*, is actually a book of dirty limericks.

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Published whenever or so by The Spuzzum Press.
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Photos courtesy of The John W. Herbert Collection.
Photos by John W. Herbert, Brenda Mundigler, Louise Peters, E.B. Klassen and Monica Spencer.

X-rays images provided courtesy of the British Columbia health care system.

the big ouch

It's an odd sensation, realizing that your bicycle has suddenly stopped but you haven't. That your handlebar has suddenly snapped to the right and stopped your bike cold while momentum is still carrying you forward. That not only are you flying over your handlebar but that you are twisting in mid-air to the right and are now travelling sideways, a change of direction that will probably save your life, but in this moment only adds to the disorientation.

Then you realize that the ground is getting closer. You barely have time to register that this is going to be bad. And that it's going to hurt.

It is bad. And it hurts.

Last November I was riding my bike home along the path I do everyday. Part of the journey is a short trail connecting Burnside Road with the back of Tillicum Mall. On this day, dusk, 5:00 pm, water had washed out a pothole that had been filled by gravel back in the summer. Was the washout caused by all the rain we had received in November? Or was it run-off from the watermain that had burst in Tillicum Mall an hour previously? I don't know. All I do know is that as I went down the path, my front wheel caught something and I flipped off my bike. There was a small culvert ahead of me with a concrete pad over top of it. I landed on the concrete pad with all my weight on my left shoulder.

"Ummmfph!"

The air rushed out of my lungs on impact. I bounced off my shoulder and onto my back (my backpack, actually). My legs swung up beside me and ended up in some bushes just off the trail. I'm not sure what happened to my bike. At least it didn't run over me.

I knew right away something was wrong with my left arm. It didn't feel "attached" properly. Still, I tried to gently move it, but the pain told that I had probably broken it. There was also the disquieting sensation of things rubbing together that should not be rubbing together.

Okay, so the left arm was clearly an issue. What else was broken? I hadn't hit my head (and yes, I always wear my helmet). I wiggled my toes, they seemed okay. My right arm seemed fine. It felt like I might have a scorch on my left leg, but this was minor. Everything seemed up and running save my left arm.

I needed my cell phone which was in my backpack, and was now underneath me. Okay. This was gonna hurt, but there wasn't much else to do. Cradling my left arm as best I could, I swivelled on my butt, getting my legs out of the bushes. Then I sat up.

Yes, it hurt.

I rested a moment, then cradled my left hand in my lap, then

slowly unbuckled and removed my backpack.

I somehow managed to get my left arm out of the straps, then I opened it up and fished out my phone. I turned it on, hoping that it still had some juice. It did, I dialed 911. The operator was cool and professional and able to figure out what trail I was on. He asked if I was bleeding; I said I didn't think so. He asked if I could get up and walk along the trail. I said I probably could, but I'd just as soon sit where I was.

I hung up and started to call family members to alert them to my plight. I told my mother that Louise would call soon. (I was supposed to help Louise move some furniture that evening — clearly, I would do anything to get out of that.)

Just as I finished calling my mother, my first guardian of the evening arrived. A gentleman named Ollie rode down the trail and stopped to assist me. He picked up my bike from across the path and offered to wait until the ambulance arrived.

When the ambulance arrived, Ollie, who as it turned out lives just a couple of blocks from me, offered to take my bike home.

The bike was fine. Of course.

The paramedics checked me out. They cut away my bike jacket and jersey from my arm. I'm no doctor, but I could see that my shoulder looked wrong. Instead of curving down, it suddenly dropped off, and there was a large bump where there shouldn't be a bump. This was the ball joint at the end of arm sitting in a place where it shouldn't be. They checked my arm for numbness and I had a big numb spot on the outside of left arm. This indicated possible nerve damage.

They immobilized my arm by wrapping what looked like a life preserver around me, they got me to feet and we walked down the path. I climbed into the ambulance and sat down. They moved me over to the stretcher later as they tried to put in an IV line in my right hand. The paramedic kept failing to find a vein and apologised profously for continually poking my right hand in vein, er, vain. We went to Victoria General Hospital.

* * *

The one nice thing about being seriously injured is that you go to the front of the queue at Emergency. This was probably a good thing, as by the time the ambulance got me to VGH, my arm was really hurting and I could feel myself getting more uncomfortable. I was probably going into shock, perhaps not deeply, but going there.

As I was waiting to be admitted, one paramedic noted my discomfort and offered me a blanket. Being a stoic male, I declined the offer.

"Let me give you some advice," said the paramedic. "When a paramedic offers you a warm blanket, you should take it."

"Golly," I said, "maybe I'll take that blanket after all!"

It was now about 6:00, about an hour after I fell off my bike. Soon, I was wheeled into a cubicle, where they quickly started

me on an IV. A doctor came in, took a quick look and very quickly determined that at the very least my shoulder was dislocated. He asked if I had any numb patches and I indicated I did, on the side of arm. This could mean nerve damage.

Then he uttered the one word that I was longing to hear: morphine!

But soon I was left alone, and I reflected on my situation. I would need help tending to my sick cat. Someone was going to have to call work and let them know I was going to be off for a few days.

I looked at my arm. Man, I really wrecked it.

By this time, more of my guardians began arriving. First, my sister Brenda arrived, followed by my girlfriend Louise. Each time, the nurse mistook them for my wife.

My memory of events during this period is somewhat fluid, but somewhere between the blood tests and the IV drips, they took me to X-ray.

This was not an experience I'd like to repeat.

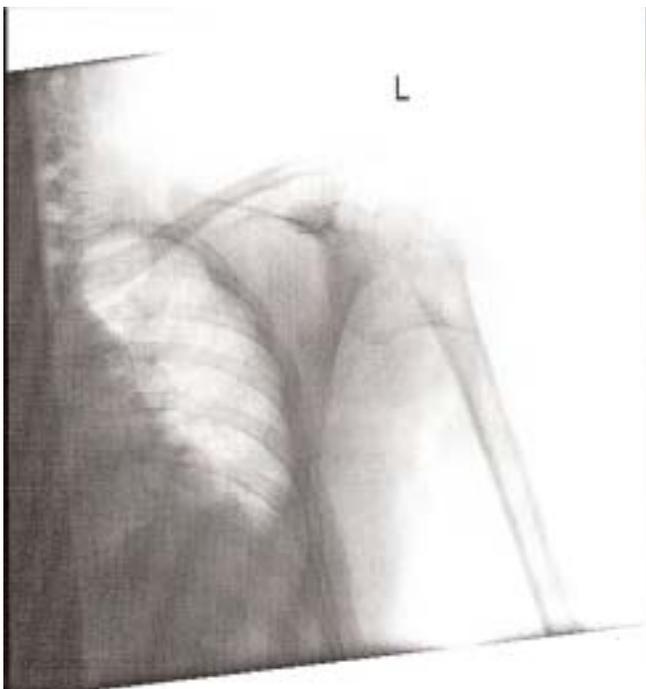
The x-rays taken while I was standing up weren't so bad, but I had to lie flat on my back for a set and this really hurt. I never saw any of the "before" X-rays until much later, but lying flat was excruciating and I could clearly feel bones floating around in there. That was 20 minutes that I never want to repeat.

But interestingly, the numb patch in my arm regained feeling after the x-ray ordeal. I surmise that something moved just enough to take pressure off the nerve, and there were no more concerns about nerve damage from that point on

I was taken back to my room to await judgement. Brenda and Louise both commented about how cold my hands were.

Soon, a young woman appeared, the orthopedic intern. She'd looked at x-ray, and reported that my arm was broken in three places and my shoulder dislocated. Worse, I had broken my arm at the ball joint, making repairs all the more troublesome.

Here's the x-ray:



Now, I'm no doctor, but clearly you can see that the shoulder is out of the socket, and the ball is broken, and not in the correct shape. Plus there are bundles of muscles and tissue that should be attached to bone that aren't.

She said there were two courses of action. I was going to need surgery on the arm, no question. But do we fix the dislocation with surgery at the same time, or do we fix the dislocation manually, then do surgery on the arm later?

This didn't seem like much of a choice to me. If I'm going to go under the knife anyway, must as well do it all in one go.

But she wanted to call in some experts, so who am I to argue?

Somewhere along the way, the paramedic's gear was removed from my arm and replaced with a sling which I am still wearing. (I'm typing this one-handed, so please read this at half your usual reading speed to get the full effect.)

The intern returned with the verdict.

"When I suggested we fix the dislocation first, everyone laughed at me."

There were two problems with her plan. First, the ball was broken off. It was not attached to the rest of the arm. There was no way to re-insert the ball into the socket. It probably would have caused more damage. Secondly, even if it was safe to proceed, she probably couldn't have done it.

I'm a big guy, and she was not a big girl. She physically could not have done it and the last thing my broken arm needed was someone heaving and hauling on my shoulder.

She said she would start on the paperwork and took a felt pen and initialed my injured left shoulder.

So it was surgery, a one-stop fix everything chop. Sort of like Midas Mufflers.

Surgery was set for 7:45 the next morning, not at VGH, but at Royal Jubilee Hospital. The only question was, could they find a bed for me there? An ambulance was ordered anyway to transfer me. Louise and Brenda said their goodbyes and headed out to spread the word that I would, in fact, live. They noted before they left that my hands were warming up.

A nurse returned with the paperwork for me to sign, but stopped herself before handing it over. It seems that the intern, despite having examined and marked my injured *left* shoulder, put down on the forms that it was my *right* shoulder that was to be operated on.

Oops.

Once the paperwork was fixed, I signed. Good thing I'm right-handed.

So there it was. I was facing my first surgery since having my tonsils out since I was 5.

The orthopedic surgeon, my newest guardian, drove over from the Jubilee to examine me. He explained that the surgery would take about two and a half hours. I've heard since that he is the best "shoulder man" on the Island. So far, I'd have to agree.

Around about 11:30, an ambulance arrived to transport me to the Jubilee, they found a bed for me, so we were all set. They loaded me up, and away we went. It was a quiet night for emergencies, the paramedics said. The quietest night they'd ever seen. They'd been on duty for six hours, and I was their first call. And I was just a glorified taxi ride.

By 12:30, I was safely tucked in my bed in Jubilee. Surgery was only hours away.

* * *

“Go towards the light,” said the voice.

I could see the light, beckoning, calling.

I have not had any surgery or anesthesia since having my tonsils removed as a child. I have no recollection of being under.

“Go towards the light.”

Sometimes things go wrong in surgery. You don’t wake up. Could this be happening now? Could the surgery have gone horribly wrong and now I was to find out the answers to the ultimate question of life, the universe and everything?

“Go towards the light.”

Or was something else happening?

1:15am.

The nurse comes by and offers me a drink of water. It will be my last drink before surgery. She asks when the last time was that I went to the washroom. It’s been hours, so she suggests that I go.

She helps me out of bed, and I stagger along the floor, my busted left arm and shoulder in a sling, my right arm dragging my IV rack. I make it out of my cubicle where my bed is located, but I have no idea where the washroom is.

“Which way?” I ask.

She points to my left. A door is open, with a light shining behind it.

“Go towards the light.”

“A fine thing to say to a person hours before surgery,” I harrumph.

“Oh great,” she mumbles, “it’s going to be one of those nights.”

It’s amazing how much your life can change in an instant. This morning, I was dreaming of an 18’ kayak. Now, after tumbling off my bike, I’m wondering if I can go to the bathroom without screaming.

Kayaking is a distant memory.

There was no screaming. In fact, the entire urination process was reassuringly painless. I return to bed, and sleep in fits and starts. I awake around 7, about 45 minutes before surgery. Breakfast arrives for the other patients, but not for me. The nurse warns me that should a breakfast accidentally arrive for me, I shouldn’t eat it. I haven’t eaten in 18 hours now, but I’m not hungry. In fact, I will go about 30 hours between meals. I was never hungry.

The nurse returns to explain the procedure. Around 7:45, the anesthesiologist will come and sedate me. (This never happens.) They will wheel me into the waiting area, then the operating room. The anesthesiologist will then inject something into my IV and put me out, and from my point of view, I will wake up right away in the recovery room. No time will pass for me. I may be a little disoriented, but it should pass quickly. No dreams.

The anesthesiologist does arrive, with questions for me, plus papers for me to sign. Then an orderly comes and wheels me into PreOp.

I don’t give it a lot of thought, but it does occur to me that I may be facing my last conscious moments. Mistakes do happen. Things sometimes go wrong. But I’m resigned to my fate. It’s in the lap of the gods.

I’m wheeled into the orthopedic surgical room. The operating table is narrower than I thought it would be and there’s some discussion of how to transfer me from my bed to the table. Finally, I say that I will walk over to the table. Someone helps me up and off the bed, and I cross over to the table and lie down.

It hurts, of course. Lying down on my back is the most painful position. Someone calls for “shoulder extensions”; the bed is so narrow that my shoulders hang off the sides, and for my mangled left shoulder, this isn’t helping.

I am not aware if the shoulder extensions ever arrive, and now the anesthesiologist has my attention. He explains that during surgery, they will be freezing the areas they operate on. This will reduce the pain when I come around. I’m all for that.

He starts by poking something between my left shoulder blade and neck. He’s trying to find a certain nerve or muscle group, I guess. He wants me to tell him when I feel a tingling like a mild electric shock.

“Feel anything?”

“No.”

“Feel anything?”

“No.”

“Feel anything?”

“No.”

“Feel anything?”

“No. Wait. There’s a bit of tingle. By the shoulder blade.”

“Okay, good. That tells that I’m in the right area—”

Then I open my eyes.

Which is odd because I do not remember closing them.

But my first sensation is a good one. My left arm, even though it feels sore and swollen, also feels attached and whole again.

I focus on a clock on the wall. It’s almost noon. Four hours have passed in a blink.

There’s a machine beside me automatically checking my vitals. I can feel it inflating to check my blood pressure.

I glance over at my left arm. I have a long bandage stretching from above my shoulder to half-way down my arm.

A nurse appears. She says everything went well, but the surgery was four hours, not the planned two and a half. They found additional damage in my shoulder to repair. They kept re-locating my shoulder and it kept falling out. So in addition to screws and a plate in my arm, they also performed a Bankart Repair. The nurse leaves as she tries to find a bed for me; they did the surgery even though they did not have a room to put me in afterwards.

What else did they do to me? They put in a plate and screws to fix my arm. They repaired a small break in the shoulder socket; unfortunately it was where some tendons and ligaments were

attached so they also had to be repaired. Also, a lot of muscle had to be re-attached as it had come away from the bone. Here's what my shoulder looks like now:

Yes, the plate and pins are permanent. I will never have an MRI and I will beep at airports.

The nurse returns, they found a bed for me. I ask for a drink of water. My throat is killing me — it's raw from the breathing tube they had down it.

I'm wheeled to my room, pumped full of antibiotics and morphine. I'm tired and I feel like sleeping, yet I also don't want to sleep. Mostly, I just sit dazed, occasionally nodding off.

Karl will visit me around 5:00 PM — I spent more of his visit asleep than awake. Others will visit me. Louise, Brenda, my niece Kai all stop by. Paula and Bernie visit. Bernie is mostly concerned that my right hand still works. Paula thinks I look like I've been hit in the face with a sledge hammer. Not that there's anything wrong with my face, but because the shock of this life-altering moment is still sinking in.

Dinner arrives around the same time Karl does. It's a fish patty thing, which wasn't very good. The mashed potatoes are excellent. The nurse tells me to go easy — it's my first meal in 30 hours. I nibble at it.

Details are a blur, but I am constantly poked, prodded and checked by nurses. Everything seems to be normal.

I'm sharing my room with three other patients. Across from me is a young guy who's here for the long haul. He's just ordered a tv. He knows all the nurses by their first names. They are asking him for advice on his course of treatment. I'm guessing dialysis.

Beside me is an old lady. I'm never sure what is wrong with her, but she seems to have all sorts of ailments and is taking a long time dying.. She is constantly being taken out for tests.

The third roommate is an older man who's left hand got into an argument with a table saw. I give the victory to the man only because all his fingers are still attached.

Afternoon fades into evening, and into night. It's early in the morning now. And I need to pee. There's no nurse around, so I slowly sit up. My back is killing me. I carefully stand and walk to the washroom, dragging my IV rack. A nurse has already helped me do this a couple of times, so I already got the hang of it. When I return, I stop at the window and look out. I can't see much — most of the view is blocked by the roof of another part of the hospital. But I can see the tops of some trees, some streetlights, and clouds.

I miss being outside.

And it will be along time before life becomes normal again.

I carefully climb back into bed.

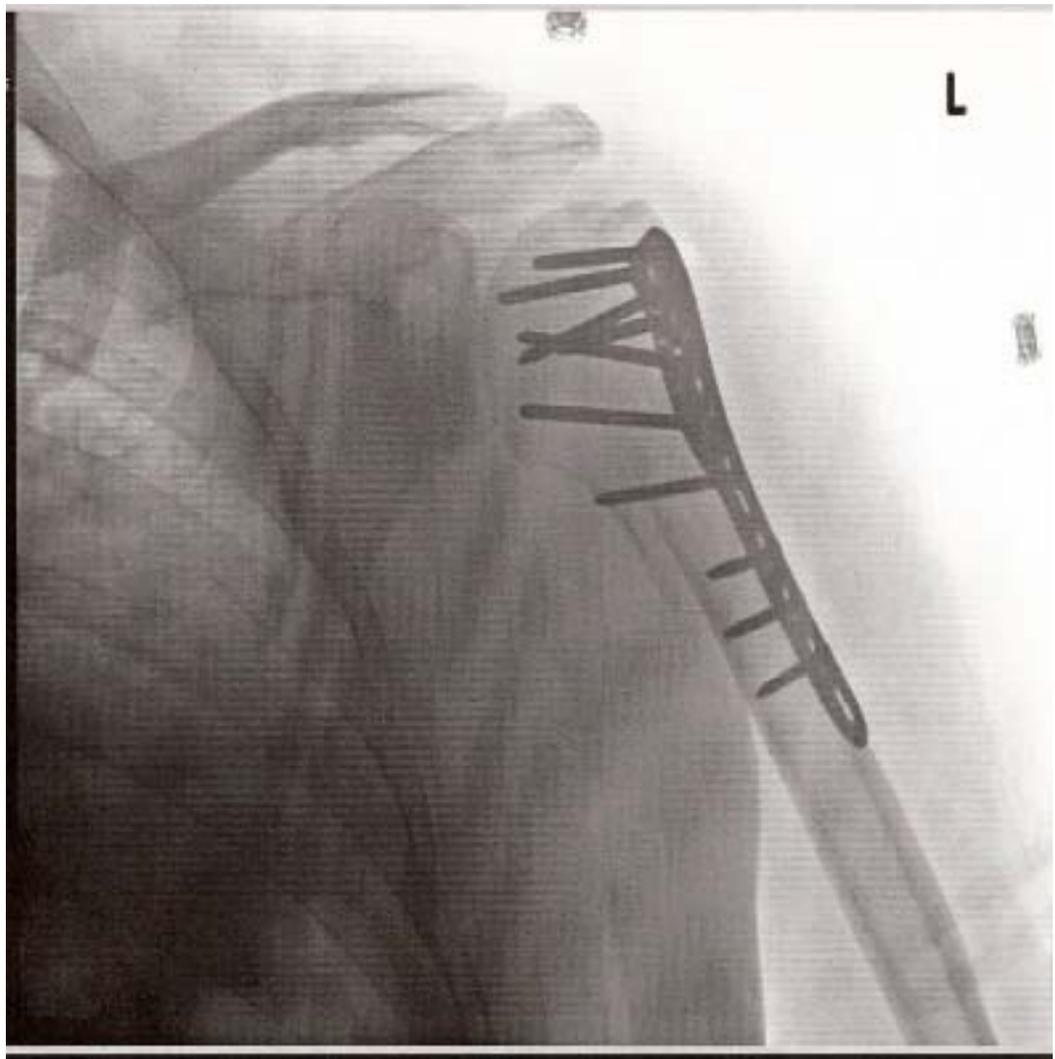
Sleep eludes me.

In the morning, I go down for x-rays. It is there that I see for the first time the steel and pins that are now part of my arm.

Holy jeez. I'm bionic or something.

The rest of the day is a blur. More drugs, more pills. More blood tests. They want me out — they need the bed. In mid-afternoon, I get the word. I can go home.

My long recovery begins.



the long recovery

I get to go home.

After more than 38 hours in hospital (4 of them in surgery having my left shoulder rebuilt after a bicycle accident), the nurse says I can go home. She pulls out a bag of my clothes and says, “Here. If you need help putting these on, I’ll be back in a few minute.”

I have a new 22cm-long surgical incision in my left arm and shoulder, freshly sutured and covered with a large bandage. My arm is tightly held in a sling. I’m loopy on morphine. *How the hell am I supposed to put clothes on?*

I can start by removing my hospital gown. It’s practically falling off anyway. Because of my arm, it can’t be fastened properly around me. Every time I’ve gone to the bathroom, my ass has been hanging out for all to see.

One little shrug and it’s off. Modesty dies quickly in a hospital.

What’s first? Well, underwear, I guess. It normally goes on first anyway (unless you’re Madonna). Don’t see why a busted shoulder should make any difference.

I’m not going to be able to reach down and hook the underwear over my feet while standing up. Bending over hurts. Doing much of anything hurts. And I have no balance. While I might be able to get the right foot in the right hole with the right hand, getting the left foot in the left hole with the right hand will be impossible, and trying it with the left hand would probably leave me kissing the hospital floor.

The last thing I want to do is fall down again.

I sit on the bed. In a sitting position, I can hook my underwear over my feet and pull it up my legs with my right hand. Near the top, I can stand up and pull it over my butt.

Ta da. Blue Fruit of the Loom boxers are on.

Well, this procedure worked so well for underwear, it ought to work for pants, too.

And it does. Mind you, I have to figure out how to buckle them and my belt with

one hand. It’s not as easy as it sounds, but not so hard either.

Socks and shoes go on at the same time, too.

Now comes the shirt. My left arm is clearly not going into any sleeve, so I put my right arm in the right sleeve and then toss the left half of my shirt over my left shoulder. With my arm against my abdomen, I button it (one-handed) as far down as I can go.

When she returns, the nurse seems surprised that I was able to do it all myself. She pretends not to recognize me — who is this well-dressed man and what have you done with my patient?

Thus beginith my recovery.

My sister is playing taxi driver for me today (as she will for many weeks to come — thanks, sis!).

The first order of business is to get me out. I have no idea where I am in the hospital. Left to my own devices, I might have been wandering the corridors for years trying to find the exit — the *Flying Dutchman* of Jubilee Hospital, ending up a crazy old man who mutters, “I beep at airports — wanna see my scar?” to anyone who will listen.

But no, my dreams of becoming a human derelict end quickly as my sister finds the way out.

I walk gingerly. Falling down would be a disaster right now. But my first few haltingly hesitant steps are soon replaced with more confident paces. I’m not setting any records, but I start to feel safe on my feet.

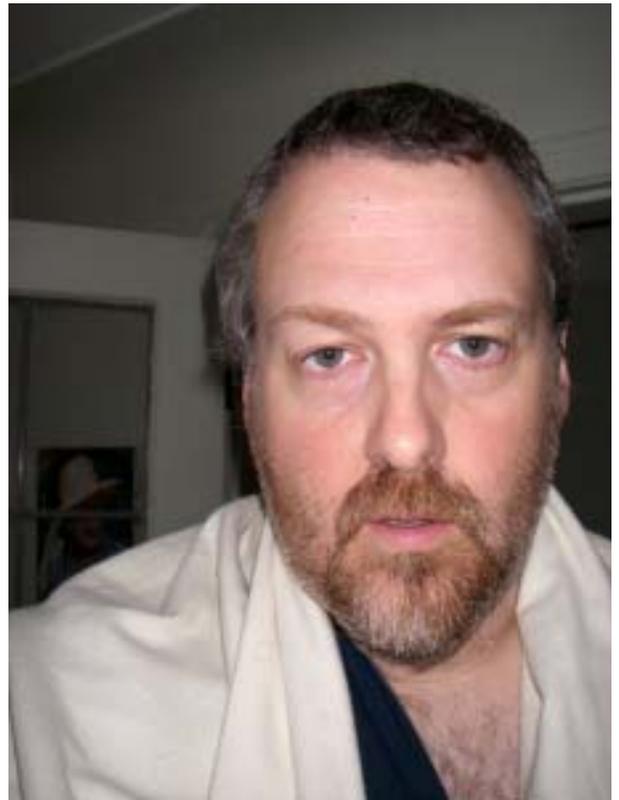
Sis has brought the van — a good thing. I don’t think the MG would have been suitable. Climbing in isn’t so bad, but

the next stumbling block is the seatbelt — I can’t fasten it. I can pull it around myself, but sis has to snap it into its latch.

Can’t do up a shirt properly, can’t fasten a seatbelt. What else can’t I do?

She drives me home, apologizing the whole way for every bump, stop, turn, braking maneuver and acceleration that occurs. Actually, it’s not too bad. The right turns hurt the most as the inertia pulls at my left shoulder.

Finally, home. What does a man look like arriving home after major surgery for a crunched shoulder? Like this:



The first thing to do is to make me comfortable. The obvious place is the couch with lots of blankets.

My left arm is useless, so I have to sit on the right end of the couch so that I can use my right arm on the arm rest to help push myself up when I stand. I also need some pillows to support my battered left

arm.

The downside is that now I can't curl up with my cat Linus, who has missed me and clearly realized something was up. In fact, we pile up extra pillows on the left side to keep Linus at bay; he's a large cat and likes to walk on me, and god forbid he should walk on my injured shoulder. Still, being home with my cat is a great start to my recovery, and he even seems to understand that although I am injured and can't really snuggle him, I did miss him and am glad for his company.

This is pretty much how I stayed for a couple of days. Sleep was impossible. Between the dull ache in my arm and my back stiffening up, there was no sleep to be had. In fact, I considered it an improvement when I was able to move to various chairs around the house during the night and not sleep in any of them. At least I was moving. But before I worried about my first night's sleep, there was another problem that I needed to face.

I needed to pee.

My bathroom is small. Tiny. The toilet is in a small alcove with little if any maneuvering room. And the transition from standing to sitting is painful and uncomfortable. And I am still wobbly. Pulling up my pants is awkward. So I have little choice. For the time being, I'm going to pee in the sink.

A couple of sleepless nights later, I was starting to smell. I needed a shower.

The only restriction I had about showering was to try and avoid having the shower spray directly on the incision. A little collateral water damage was okay. I would also have to change my dressing afterwards. My dressing looked like this:



In order to have my shower, I would have to get undressed and get my arm out of the sling. Then I would gently get in the shower and somehow do all the necessary hair and body washing one-handed, then dry off, then get dressed again. My sister volunteered to stand by if needed. I told her that if she heard a splash and a thud followed by screaming, chances are that I would be in need of some assistance.

In actuality, the shower went well. Slow and steady wins the race.

The only problem was that I couldn't get my underwear on. Because of the aforementioned limited space in the bathroom, I had not yet managed to sit down on the toilet, and sitting down was the only way I could get pants and/or underwear on. Getting tired and a little frustrated that I couldn't devise a plan for my underwear, I had no choice but to call my sister through the closed bathroom door.

"Sis, I have a problem."

"What is it?"

"I can't get my underwear on."

"How did you get them on in the hospital?"

"I was on morphine. I don't remember."

"Oh."

"So I thought you could hold them in front of me. I'll step into them and you can start them up my legs. I should be able to grab them when they reach my calves and I can pull them up myself."

My sister reluctantly agreed. I opened the door a crack, and passed her my underwear.

"Are you ready?" I asked. She nodded.

I opened the door, naked as a skinny-dipper at Mackenzie Bight. She knelt in front of me, holding out the underwear and averting her eyes. I stepped in and reached down to grab the waistband.

"You'll have to lift them higher. I can't reach down that far."

She leaned in a little closer, and lifted them a bit higher. Now I could grab them.

"How's that?"

"That's great, sis, thanks."

I got 'em. Don't hit your head on anything on your way up."

"Okay, glad I could—oh,

oh, you...."

She turned red and ran.

I went back into the bathroom and chuckled.

Then we changed the dressing. What did my incision look like? It looked like this:



I'm guessing 17 sutures. It's hard to tell, and they were dissolving sutures, so after a couple of weeks they were all gone anyway.

I had two big problems that first week. One, my arm was swelling up. I expected swelling around my shoulder and upper arm. That only made sense, that's where the injury and the surgery was, but the swelling was going down my arm towards my fingers, too. In fact, my fingers soon became giant white sausages. My whole arm was swollen and I was concerned, but the swelling soon passed and my arm returned to normal. Or what passes for normal these days.

The other problem was sleep. Or the lack thereof. After a couple of days, I moved off the couch and tried my bed. But nothing worked. I could not find a comfortable position or place to sleep. Worse, I was getting pretty wired from the Tylenol Extra Strength I was taking. I spent a couple of nights absolutely tripping out on the stuff. I took this picture at 3:00 one morning. Why? Because when you're basically immobile, dead dog tired, and hopped up on Tylenol, there really isn't much else to



He hops up on the bed. Somehow he knows that the left side is off-limits. Without hesitating, he curls up in the crook of my right arm.

We both sleep for eight solid hours.

* * *

When I first came home from the hospital, my biggest disappointment was that I could not easily snuggle my cat Linus. Whenever I sat down, my busted left arm and shoulder needed to be protected and propped up with pillows. And my right arm needed to be beside the arm of the chair or sofa so that I could use it to push myself up. I couldn't lower myself down onto my bed at first because it's so low — it has no legs and sits on the floor.

After a couple of days, I figured out a way to finally properly snuggle Linus.

do at three AM except take your own picture.

My first physio appointment was a week after surgery. It snowed that day. Yes, my first trip out of the house with my busted shoulder and arm was on a day it snowed six inches.

At the rehab clinic, I meet Jim, my therapist. "Bike accident, eh?" he says. "Let's see what you did to yourself."

He consults my chart. "Uh huh, uh huh, hmmm, uh huh, uh huh. Now that's interesting. Usually you don't see both of these injuries together. Usually, it's one or the other. But not both. Very unusual."

My elation upon hearing this knows no bounds.

But on the other hand there is some hope. Jim explains that he has fallen off his bike twice and wrecked both of his shoulders. His shoulders will never be as good as they were, but they'll be more than good enough to get by.

There's not much treatment during this first session. Not much can really be done until the swelling in my arm starts subsiding. But he does ask if I have any problems.

"Can't sleep," I mumble between yawns.

"We can fix that."

He asks me to lie down on my back on the examining table, and he grabs some pillows. He sticks one under my head, a

couple under my knees, and slides another one under my left arm, between it and my body.

Oh my. Suddenly, I'm totally relaxed.

That night I set up the pillows on my bed the way Jim did. I'm worried about Linus. Our ritual the past few years has been that he always jumps on the bed and curls in between my left arm and my body. If he tries that, it's going to hurt. I settle in with the light off and await Linus's arrival.

Only then did I feel like I was finally on the road to recovery. For those first two weeks, Linus stayed near me and watched over me. There wasn't much he could do to help me, but knowing he was there made a difference. When I walked aimlessly around the house, he walked with me. When I came back from the doctor or from physio, he greeted me at the door to ask how I was feeling. When I rested after my exercises, he rested with me.

Three weeks into my recovery, Linus



suddenly stopped eating. He seemed mostly okay, he just wasn't eating or drinking. Then he began staring mournfully at his water and food dishes as if he just couldn't remember what he was supposed to do. His urination, what little there was, became more painful. He became weak and his legs started giving out on him. The vet was stumped.

The only choice became sadly obvious.

Linus passed away on December 19, 2006. He was almost 17 years old.

I really miss him.

* * *



counter-top and let my left arm out of the sling and let it hang like a pendulum. I swing it forward and back, side to side, then it circles, first clockwise, then counter-clockwise. I swing it for about three or four minutes, twice a day. The idea is that it gently pulls on the muscles that are now super-tight and holding my arm in my shoulder socket. All those muscles have been traumatized and many surgically reattached. They were, and are, extremely tight to say the least.

Funny things were happening with my arm. Suddenly my left

arm began drying out and flaking. My right arm was fine, but my left arm suddenly developed a taste for vast amounts of moisturizer.

And I could feel strange sensations in my arm as all the new hardware rubbed

against flesh and bone. Sometimes, it even feels like it gets caught against a tendon or ligament [shudder]. It's a strange, strange feeling.

Slowly, time passed. Days became weeks. Weeks became months. Months became years. My writing became a pattern of clichés.

But seriously, time did go by slowly as I was mostly housebound. If it wasn't for the fact that I had just ordered the first two seasons of *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* on DVD, I might have gone mad.

I couldn't even write or surf the Internet much as it was too uncomfortable to sit at my computer for very long.

Christmas rolled around and I began to venture out more. Thankfully I had done most of my shopping before the accident, and Amazon did the rest.

At physio, I got to do more exercises. I had to lie on my back and, gripping it with both hands, I had to raise a cane over my head. At first, I could barely raise it 90 degrees, or just above my head. Now I can get it about 150-160 degrees over. Still got a ways to go.

Next came *The Violin*. Still lying down and with my forearms straight out in front of me at a 90 degree angle, I gripped the cane and moved it from my right to left, trying to move my left forearm away from my body while keeping my elbow in place at my side. This works to stretch my shoulder were the Bankart repair took place and the flap of muscle was sown over my shoulder socket to keep my arm in place.

After the swelling in my arm started going down, physio began in earnest. My first exercise was what's called the pendulum. It's exactly what it sounds like. I lean with my right arm on a table or

This I can only do to about 35 degrees. More work needs to be done here, too.

You're not reading this over dinner, are you?

As long as you're grossed out, here's how my scar was doing after about seven weeks.



Other exercises were added to regime like Walking Up the Wall. Simply put, I stand in front of a wall, put my left hand on it and use my fingers to “walk” my arm up it until my shoulder screams out “Enough already!”

However, the physio is going slower than expected. All these exercises that I've been doing are passive exercises, meaning that the injured area is not doing any work during the exercises it's all being done by the other arm, gravity, or in the case of my physiotherapist, someone else entirely. The normal recovery protocol for a Bankart repair would allow for active weight-bearing exercise at this point; however my arm is still too sore and stiff for this, so we are continuing with just the passive exercise. This will make for a long recovery period.

At least now I'm out of my sling.

* * *

It's funny how I suddenly discover that I can do something without even

thinking about it, or that I can still find that there are very simple tasks that I cannot do.

For instance, last week after physio, I ran for the bus. Not that the running itself was a surprising thing — I'm not much of a jogger, but up until my accident I was commuting to work on my bike five days a week, so I was in shape enough to run if need be — but the fact that I was running and my shoulder seemed pretty okay with it was an unexpected surprise. It wasn't until I got on the bus that I realized that I had run a couple of hundred metres with little discomfort.

Mind you, later that day I couldn't get my socks off. As I stood in front of the laundry hamper, I decided that the socks I was currently wearing were due a wash. So, still standing, I bent my left knee, lifted my left foot, reached down with my right hand and pulled my sock off. After lowering my left foot, I lifted my right foot and without thinking reached down with my left hand and did not have the strength to take off my right sock.

* * *

This was a week of firsts.

Monday, I had my first bath. I decided that it was time to try to get in and out of the tub. Getting in was okay, but getting out still remains a little haphazard. However, I didn't fall, and it was very relaxing. Heck, I may even have another one tonight. (You will recall that due to the tinyness of my bathroom and the awkwardness of my injury, I was forced to pee in the sink for a short while after my release from the hospital. I would like to state for the record that for some time I have been able to pee in the usual manner and into the usual bathroom fixture, although I still occasionally pee into the sink because I am a lazy and gross bastard.)

Tuesday, I tied my shoelaces for the first time in three months. After getting home from my accident, the first phone call I made was to my niece who works in a discount shoe store to ask her if they had any sneakers with velcro instead of laces. And lo, she did purchase these shoes, and they were delivered unto me, and I've been wearing them ever since. But after a recent long walk, I discovered that discount shoes aren't designed to be walked in over a

lengthy distance, and since my plan is to walk home when I return to work, it was time for more comfy (and more expensive) shoes. And so it was that on Tuesday morn, I took my old expensive sneaks out of the closet, placed them on my feet and tied the laces with no discomfort in my battered left shoulder. Huzzah, huzzah.

And today another first: my first day back at work. What a, er, um, thrill it was to be back. Makes one hanker for the days when I could just sit home, rest, watch tv and get paid. And that was just last week!

Actually, it felt good to be back, if for no other reason than it represents another small step along The Long Road Back. The shoulder seemed to survive the day fairly well. And when I did my exercises in the evening, it seemed a lot less tighter than usual. Perhaps being back at work did it some good.

I stuck up a copy of my x-ray in my cubicle. Most people were shocked at the amount of metal in my arm.

“Is that permanent?” they gasped.

“Yes,” I replied, “until someone figures that the going rate for titanium is worth digging up my cold and rotting corpse for.” I walked home, as per my plan, and although I was jealous of every bike rider that passed me and every kayaker in the harbour (there was only one, and he had to be crazy to be out on a stormy day like today), at the end of the day I feel a little more confident that one day soon I'll be back on my bike and in my kayak.

* * *

Clearly, things are looking up — last night I went through the drive-in at Wendy's.

Now before you get yer garters in an uproar about global cow warming and all that, consider this: I drove up to the order window, wound open my own window, and passed out money, then took back my change then took in my drink and meal.

I did it all with my left arm.

Slowly, very slowly, my shoulder is getting better.

It's still very weak, and mobility is still limited, but it is coming back. I keep finding myself able to do things that a week or two ago I couldn't.

And I must be feeling optimistic about

my eventual return to the kayaking — yesterday I ordered a waterproof VHF radio.

* * *

It's hard to believe that 15 weeks ago, almost four months, I was just coming out of surgery on my shoulder. Range of motion is still an issue, and as yet I'm still not doing any real strength training, but that should start any time now.

Today my doctor said that everything was as it should be. He ordered up another set of xrays, but he figures this will be the last set because the bone and the titanium look good. Now it's just a question of how well the soft tissue comes back.

Here's one of today's x-rays. This is from the side — a profile shot, if you like. Man, that's a lot of titanium.



* * *

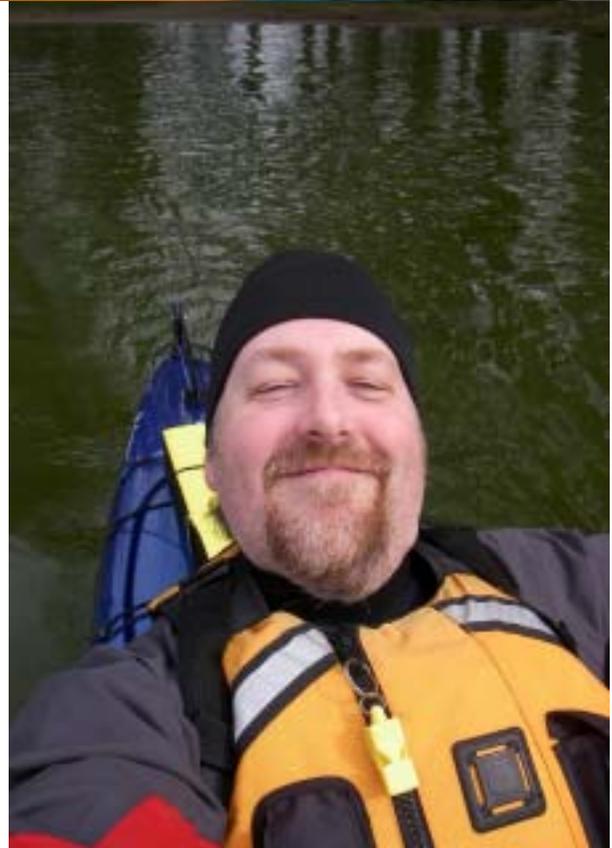


Time munches on.

Now over four months after my bike accident, my once-broken arm and shoulder still have a road to travel before they could be said to be recovered.

That said, a lot of progress has been made over the last few weeks.

First, I have graduated to what is referred to in physio lingo as “resisted exercise.” You and I call it pulling giant rubber bands. This is significant because my range of motion, while still not yet in the normal range (and may never fully be), is certainly in the range of motion for getting by. The problem is that I have no strength in the arm. In fact I have more range than strength. If I left up my left arm in front on me, I might





get 130-135 degrees of rotation. But if I use my right arm to push my left arm up further, I'll get 175-180 degrees of rotation.

So now we're into strength building and re-activating the muscles that haven't had to work in months. Hence the rubber bands. I have eight exercises to do with the bands, plus one exercise with a free weight, a whopping three-pounder!

Other good news: I don't need to do stretches with a cane anymore. I'm flexible enough now that I can do some new stretches that do the job better and don't require the cane. And I'm now down to once-a-week visit to the physio dude.

So now the question is when do I get back on my bike and into my kayak? That remains to be seen. The Victoria Day weekend marks about six months since my accident, which was sort of the time frame mentioned by my surgeon, so that is a target that is on my mind. Sometimes I feel that Canada Day is a more realistic time

frame, but we'll have to wait and see. The point is that I WILL be back on my bike and on the water this summer.

Woo hoo!

* * *

Despite my prediction in the last installment that it might be at least a month before I'd be back on the water or on my bike, a few days ago my physio-therapist gave me permission to kayak and ride again. So not being a person to let moss grow under my feet, mainly because then they smell icky and turn green, it was time to return to action with a short paddle at Elk Lake.

The Usual Gang showed up: Alison, Paula, Louise, Bernie, and myself. Even the elusive Dennis appeared.

My left arm is still weak, so getting in and out was a bit of a challenge. I tried a couple of times on land and it was doable.

So I got into my kayak and Paula pushed me off.

And now, 161 days after my last paddle, I can only paraphrase Bill Murray from the film *What About Bob?*: I'm paddling! I'm paddling!

My shoulder survived reasonably well. It was sore and stiff, but not overly so. The hardest part was tying down the kayaks onto the van. Holding my arms up while tying off the straps took a lot of effort. But I did it! Or rather, we did it, as everyone was very keen to help. Afterwards, The Gang presented me with a Challenge Trophy, for overcoming a challenge!

Ah, bliss.

* * *

Today was another Doctor appointment. My surgeon wanted another look-see.

After I stretched and move my arm and shoulder around, he said he was very pleased with my recovery. So pleased in fact that he doesn't want to see me again.

He said that I will probably never get full range back, especially when reaching straight up over my head. But the mobility that I have now is more than adequate to be described as functional. And as long as I use it, it will keep getting better, so working and stretching are still the keys.

He said that I had sustained a lot of damage and scarring, but he was quite happy with my recovery.

And so am I, of course. I thanked him, and left the hospital. Five months ago, my arm and shoulder were shattered. Now my arm works. What more can I ask for?

* * *

A couple of weeks ago, my physio-therapist washed his hands of me and my course of prescribed therapy ended. This doesn't mean I'm done - I'll be stretching and working shoulder for the rest of my life.

But I'm glad to see my therapy end. As much help and encouragement that Jim was, I'm glad that I don't have to see him anymore. I'm sure he understands. :)

Today was another giant step in my recovery — I rode to work for the first time since the accident. I didn't push it. I stayed in the middle gears and had a nice slow ride.

It went great. My arm and shoulder survived and were fine. No pain, no soreness.

I can't explain how wonderful it felt to be on my wheels again.

The only disappointment was during my ride home. All day long I thought about what I would do when I encountered the

But as I approached, the trail was roped off. The municipality was in the middle of beautifying the area, and the trail was closed for the duration of the work. As I got closer, I realized that they had changed the path completely. The little trail that I fell on isn't even there anymore.

The piece of ground where I left my mark is gone now, but the marks it left on me will stay with me. The scar on my shoulder and the metal in my arm will be a constant reminder to me of how close I came.

And how lucky I am.

* * *

So I finally *finally* **FINALLY** got the bill for my ambulance ride of last November 20.

I have no real complaints in paying it — after all, I had paramedics find me on the trail, stabilize me for transport, transport me, then I had xrays, tests, then I was transported to a different hospital, then four hours of surgery while a shwack of titanium was put in my arm, drugs, two days in hospital, follow-up doctor's visits and xrays and five months of twice-a-week physio and all I have to pay out

of pocket is \$15 for my sling and \$54 for my initial ambulance ride — but why in god's name does it take so long to send the bill out? My accident was nearly 7 months ago! And now they send the bill!???

I bet they would be really choked if I took seven months to pay it!



My First Bike Ride in 160 Days

small piece of trail between Burnside Road and Tillicum Road where I came off all those weeks ago. Would I ride it? Or would I just avoid it and alter my route?

I didn't decide until I was riding home. I decided that I was feeling okay and I would ride that bit of trail. I would go slow, I might even stop for a moment of contemplation. I would ride that trail.

reviews

Endless Wire - The Who

This week, I did something that I haven't done in 24 years – I bought a new studio album by The Who. Recorded in fits and starts over the last four years, *Endless Wire* could have been an embarrassment, a lacklustre last kick at the can. Thankfully, it's not, but neither is it a grand triumph either. It's as good as the sum of its parts, it's just that some of the parts seem to be missing.

The most obvious missing parts are The Who's late and lamented rhythm section. With bassist John Entwistle four years gone and drummer Keith Moon's death approaching its 30th anniversary, the survivors (guitarist and songwriter Pete Townshend and singer Roger Daltrey) have done away with the bass and drums altogether on some songs, offering a mix of acoustic numbers and mid-tempo rockers, followed by a ten-song mini-opera, *Wire and Glass*.

The album opens with *Fragments*, which starts with a deliberate re-stating of the famous *Baba O'Riley* synth riff, placing this album clearly in the pantheon of Townshend's work associated with his early 1970s *Lifeshouse* project, his aborted follow-up to *Tommy* that has driven much of his work since, including *Who's Next*, *Psychoderelict*, and *The Boy Who Heard Music*. When the song starts and the band kicks in, we are in true Who heaven, glorious Townshend backing vocals supporting Daltrey's unearthly growl. It must be noted that while Daltrey's voice live has certainly lost its punch over the years, he lets it all out on this set of songs, sounding almost as good as ever.

Next up is one of those acoustic numbers, *Man in a Purple Dress*, a scathing indictment of organized religion, followed by one of those mid-tempo rockers (and one of my favourite tracks) *Mike Post Theme*. Next comes *In the Ether*, a solo by Townshend where he affects his best Tom Waits impression. Townshend thinks this is one of the best songs he's ever written. Daltrey thinks it's crap. The truth is

somewhere in between.

Later comes the mini-opera. In some ways, *Wire and Glass* is disappointing not so much for what it is, but what it could have been. The plot, such as can be discerned, involves three kids who form a band, post their song on the "endless wire" (a concept that dates back to Townshend's *Lifeshouse* in the '70s and predates the Internet), have a big hit, and then the band falls apart. Somehow the character of Ray High from Townshend's 1993 solo album *Psychoderelict* figures in this, too.

The good news is that the songs in the opera are terrific, great little hook-filled nuggets. The bad news is that they are only nuggets. Most of the opera's songs are only 90 seconds to two minutes long, and end just as they get going. And that's such a shame because so many of them are so darn good. Extended versions of two of the best, *We've Got a Hit* and *Endless Wire*, are included as bonus tracks on the CD and demonstrate just how good this could have been if only these songs had had a bit more room to breathe. Still, there's some remarkable stuff here. Townshend is at his sarcastic best on *They Made My Dreams Come True*, while *Tea and Theatre*, another acoustic number, is a remarkable closer.

This is not the high point of The Who's career, but it's pretty good nonetheless. I look forward to their next album in 2030.

Ark II

On the scorched and polluted Earth of the 25th century, three young scientists and their hyper-intelligent talking chimpanzee roam the land in *Ark II*, a sophisticated mobile lab and research centre, to help rebuild and restore civilization. Led by Jonah (played by the late Terry Lester), every week he and his crew — Ruth (Jean Marie Hon), Samuel (Jose Flores) and Adam (Moochie the chimp) — would help villagers and farmers fend off environmental scourges, scavengers, crazy computers or immortal demagogues in a non-violent manner.

It was Saturday mornings, after all.

In fact *Ark II* was the most expensive live-action Saturday morning kids' show of its time. Produced by Filmation, it premiered in September 1976, and although only 15 episodes were produced, remained on the air until 1979. It featured some great guest stars — Jonathan Harris, Malachi Throne, Del Munroe, a very young Helen Hunt, Jim Backus and Robbie the Robot (uncredited, alas) — as well as some very cool vehicles.

The premise of each episode was often similar: the Ark crew would be assigned (by a never-seen headquarters) to investigate some strange happening in a village. The villagers would be often fearful of the Ark and its crew, Ruth or Samuel would get into trouble, but then the villagers would realize the error of their ways and everything would turn out okay. But not before Jonah would have to fly around in his jet-pack. (And no wires here, kids — it was a real flying jetpack. Is that cool or what?)

It wasn't as cheesy as it sounds, although the production values are sometimes lacking (each episode was shot in only three days). Each episode contained a "message," but viewers were never slammed over the head with it and the show never sank to the level of cliché. They even went out of their way to avoid the obvious cliché — Adam the chimp is never played for comedy relief; he was an equal member of the crew. Even if he was wearing a diaper under his costume.

The show was shot on 16mm film, so it's never going to look great. That said, the newly remastered DVD release makes the series look pretty good. And for a 30 year-old series that only filmed 15 episodes, there's a wealth of behind-the-scenes material: two episode commentaries, a new "making of" documentary, plus assorted photo and art galleries. But wait — there's more! Also included is DVD-Rom material, including all the shooting scripts, plus the series bible.

Many of the Filmation live-action Saturday morning shows are due to be released on DVD in 2007.

Linus, the most beloved and bestest cat in the history of the world, passed away peacefully in his person's arms after bravely facing a short and sudden illness. He was nearly 17.

As a kitten, he quickly mastered all the difficult tricks: flying, levitation, wall climbing, and plant destruction. It was during this phase of his life that he earned the nickname "Booger-cat!" which stuck with him his whole life. But he was a gentle

and loving spirit that won over all he met, cat-lovers and cat-haters alike.

As he matured, the "boogerish" aspects of his personality faded, and he remained gentle and sweet, and a constant "couch buddy" to his person.

There will be other cats in his person's life; there will never be another cat like Linus.

Linus leaves behind an empty sunbeam, his toy mouse, his spot on the

couch, his sixteen-year old scratching post, the cat blanket he never used, and the tears of his heart-broken person.

Linus, my friend, companion, and furry hot water bottle, I miss you terribly...



Linus: March 26, 1990 - Dec 19, 2006

