

## 9th Storyworth: Did You Have Any Serious Accidents As A Child?

I am unaware of any accidents before I was a teenager, although I assume there might have been some. I did have my tonsils out long before I knew much about it – were were still in the Bronx and I was therefore a toddler, and know no more than that about it. The only other surgery I received was for my appendix, which did not occur until I was already married, just as it recently afflicted my Son in Law. I wonder if there is a pattern there ;-)

However, I did have a serious head injury as a teen, and took a softball to my right eye after I was married. I am here to dispute the assertion that they are “soft” at ALL ;-). The teen head injury occurred because a “monkey bars” in the school yard in Hyde Park was at just the wrong height. It was, of course, low enough that kids could fall from trying to swing from it without hurting themselves, but was just above eye level for me. And if you have ever banged your head on an open freezer or cabinet door, you can relate I am sure. Your field of view is usually inclusive the ground you are about to next step upon, but that implicitly limits the upper level of your viewpoint to just above your eyebrows. I sometimes wonder if Mom Nature didn’t intend a cruel joke by putting cushioning “bumpers” there, whose purpose otherwise has always eluded me ;-)

But there I was, sprawled on my back with a big black and blue mark in the middle of my forehead just above my eyebrows because, of course, the monkey bars are made with ROUND pipe rather than square, so the eyebrow cushions were worthless ;-)

I did survive (well, SOME people might argue with that ;-)) and don’t recall having what I know now would have been sure signs of a concussion. But I suspect it might have been likely. Otherwise, I suffered no broken bones of any kind while growing up.

I did receive a burn to my right hand which shows the scar to this day. Living where we did in the country at the time, we burned our trash in what was a perforated metal garbage can with a lid designed to contain the sparks so as to prevent wildfires and the like. I would lift it with a furring strip, which is a rectangular cross section wood stick about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch by 1-3/4 inch. Only much later in life did I recognize how easily I could have protected myself by simply putting a nail in the side of the wood, but at the time no such insight came to the fore. So when I lifted the lid using the wood stick, and it stuck briefly, the effort to lift resulted in the hot cover being at the end of a slippery stick well above my hand level, and slid right down the stick to hit the back of my hand. Not pleasant ;-)

The remainder of injuries I suffered were largely as inflicted by my parents, who used a leather belt in the case of my Dad, or a whiffle bat or wooden or wire hanger in the case of my Mom. Being good Catholics, they believed in corporal punishment, which I find an affront to my dignity – when MY daughter was growing up, if I and my equally educated wife could not figure some deprivation scheme for something Jess wanted, pending her satisfying our expectations, then we figured it was OUR stupidity and bad parentage, and there was nothing to be gained by child abuse. That is not to suggest we were NEVER frustrated – she learned to rationalize all too well. But physical injury was NEVER going to be a tactic we’d use, not least because we’d been the unhappy recipients ourselves when WE were her age.

All my other “injuries” were the result of cruelty on the part of my classmates and “friends”, which proved just how miserable kids can be. But they also helped to toughen me adequately that I can look back with enough honesty to see they were simply that, and that EVERY kid had to go through that same “growing up” process.

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