

“Holiday Weekend Horror Story”
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Last Monday, August 29, CHNW (my wife) and I were thrust from our motorcycle by the front bumper of a careless driver. We were then treated to an unscheduled visit to the emergency room of the Brooklyn Hospital and released a few hours later. On Friday of the same week, the beginning of Labor Day weekend here in the U.S., CHNW developed a complication with one of her injuries and we had to return that evening for more of the unique brand of amusement that a city hospital has to offer. The following is an account of that visit.

7:30 pm: We entered the hospital, stopped by the emergency room registration desk and filled them in on the reason for our visit. Anyone who has arrived at an emergency room in anything but an ambulance knows that if there is no visible blood leaking from your body or internal elements escaping your skin (i.e. bones, organs) you may well be in the waiting room long enough to wish you'd brought a toothbrush, razor, and a change of clothing. The waiting room of Brooklyn Hospital's ER is not particularly inviting, as I suspect many inner-city hospitals can claim. The floor is vintage linoleum from the 1960s and the iron-mesh chairs welded to long, horizontal poles are more reminiscent of a bus stop than a place where a person in pain would want to spend more than 15 seconds. Most of these torture devices were already taken by a ghetto mob watching a 1970s-era TV blaring some survival reality show at top volume as it dangled from the ceiling. I suspect this environment is intentionally designed this way to weed out those patients who do not *really* want to live.

8:30pm: Because my wife has had an artificial heart valve for the past 17 years and is therefore more susceptible to dropping dead at a moment's notice, they allowed us into the inner sanctum of disease, damage, and doctors before the requisite 6-hour wait. Once inside, she was placed on a gurney (not made of wire mesh,

Recently my wife and I were involved in an accident. We then went to the hospital. We were released a few hours later. Later that week, my wife had to return to the hospital.

7:30 pm: We entered the hospital and told them why we were there. Anyone who has ever visited an emergency room knows you may be in the waiting room a long time. The waiting room of this hospital's ER is not particularly inviting. It was crowded, old, and uncomfortable.

8:30pm: Because my wife has a medical condition, they allowed us into the inner sanctum before the required long wait. Once inside, one can observe a lot. We would spend a lot of time there. I stayed nearby wanting to sit down. I saw a chair and sat down but a nurse told me I couldn't sit there. I tried to stay but she wouldn't let me.

thank god!) in a large room full of several rows of gurneys, each separated by thin curtains placed at 5-foot intervals. From this vantage point, one can see, hear and smell anything going on with the 20- or 30-something other patients. We would spend the next 5 hours in that narrow space. (I hovered nearby wishing for a place to sit. I spotted a vacant, padded office chair with wheels and sat down but was chased off by a nurse because “*the chair has wheels and if you fall off of it, you could sue us.*” I confidently informed her that I’ve been sitting in wheeled office chairs daily for most of my adult life and have not fallen out of one without the aid of recreational drugs, but she was unimpressed.)

8:30pm to 1:30am: Most of the inmates of the emergency room that night were indigent old folks. One woman, whom I would guess was in her eighties, was slipping in and out of consciousness with various tubes and monitors attached to her, covered in blankets, clearly not long for this world. All of this was topped off with a large, white hat covered in rhinestones. I’m not sure if she died that night, but if she did, she went out in style.

Another woman, perhaps in her sixties, arrived with her adult daughter whom I suspect was named “Becky.” The woman, strapped firmly to a gurney, was sit-com drunk and her monologue for the next 45 minutes was, “*Becky!* (3 second pause) *Becky!* (3 second pause) *Becky!* (repeat)” Every few minutes Becky, who was standing next to her gurney, would shout, “*Why you gotta keep shouting my name? I’m right here!*” Then the sequence would repeat. I gathered from overheard conversations with nurses that the daughter brought the drunken mom in because she had fallen down at home and broken her arm. After three quarters of an hour of this calamity, I was very close to breaking the other one.

At around **10pm**, an elderly gentleman came shuffling through the ER with his hands cuffed to a large, leather belt around his waist and his feet shackled together. I was happy to see he was followed closely by a member of the NYPD. I comforted myself with the knowledge that in all likelihood, I would be going home before he would.

Everyone’s favorite event that night was at around **11pm**,

8:30pm to 1:30am: There were a lot of old people in the emergency room that night. One woman was not doing well. She was wearing a hat.

Another woman was there with her daughter. The woman was drunk, and she spent a lot of time repeating herself. I became frustrated.

At around **10pm**, an old man entered. A policeman was with him. I was happy.

Everyone’s favorite event that night was at around **11pm**, when the

when the large room was suddenly filled to the brim with noxious fumes. We all smelled it, we all grimaced, we all knew what it was. Someone in the room had shat themselves. The nurses and orderlies, mouths covered, scurried frantically from bed to bed trying to figure out who had done it. There was no guarantee this person was even conscious, after all, so you could hardly expect them to raise their hand.

At **1:30am**, they took CHNW up to the sixth floor to keep her overnight. This is an older, not very wealthy hospital that has not spent a lot of funds on cosmetic upkeep. Virtually every corner is busted from collisions with gurneys and other medical equipment. The metal frames of the beds were chipped and rusted. The bathroom fixtures were so old I was not sure how they worked or in some cases, what they were for. It looked as much like a Bosnian rebel hideout as a place of convalescence. You could evacuate the people and shoot a horror film there next week without redecorating.

Still, somehow CHNW got out alive the next day and she seems to be healing nicely. The moral of this story for us is never to be seriously injured again. At least not in our own neighborhood.

How was your holiday weekend?

room was suddenly smelly. Someone in the room had an accident. The staff tried to figure out who it was.

At **1:30am**, they took my wife to keep longer. This is an older hospital. There is a lot of damage and old stuff.

Somehow my wife was later released and seems fine. The moral of this story for us is never to be injured again.

How was your holiday weekend?