

Dear Lou

3-8-88

A LITTLE NEWS FROM ALYN W. HESS on MARCH 1st 1988

I have not written in response to many greetings and letters received during late fall and winter so far. I was sometimes having lots of gas in the intestines from early fall which on Thanksgiving day gave way to full diarrhea. I thought it was the flu going around. The good news is that the doctor's suspicion has proven true. I have become allergic to Dairy products! After 48 years! Once I cut all of that out, there has been no diarrhea. The good news is that I lost 15 unwanted pounds during the two months of symptoms. So I'm looking better now than I have for a couple years.

The bad news part of this is that allergic reactions are immune system responses. A new allergy means that the immune system has changed. Which is what I had expected based on the several years of testing at the Veterans Hospital in the isoprenaline testing of that new drug which I've been taking daily. It boosts supposedly how the immune system works. But I'm now starting to get quite a few little odd infections and new little and big physical problems. I've had giardia labia an intestinal protozoa infection, Herpes cold sores have begun up in the nose and migrate down and out into mustache and even beard! Shaving cuts don't heal fast and have gotten infected despite use of antiseptics. I've had several fingernails get infected. Doc. Taft had warned me that he had seen those sorts of things in his other early AIDS patients. Which means I've degenerated into a further stage of the preAIDS or fullblown syndrome.

The major problem now is having a catheter up into the bladder to drain urine. I have been having problem urinating for years. My friends call me prince dainty trickle for the tiny intermittent flow. I had seen the urologist a couple years ago but he said as long as it flows why worry? Well it stopped flowing during the early A.M. of Feb. 3rd after having had to massage and "milk" out the flow for several days. I got to the emergency room and they catheterized me to drain off a large amount of urine. Then after having it drain they took out the tube over my objections. I went home but could not pass any more urine. So after a few hours I could again feel the pressure building up. Back I went for a second tube insertion. That one was left in but after a few days of little sleep and bad pain I just was having a real problem with the tube. The antibiotics had had 4½ days to work to reduce the swelling in the prostate so I went back and begged to have the tube removed. I was able to go for 12 hours Sunday but then the stoppage returned. So I still have the tube in now month later.

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So if I could not tolerate the tube more than 4 days at first, How can I get along with it all this time and expect to continue for 11 more days? Well they gave me a special sedative with acts on the urethra and deadens it so I can't feel all the vibrations and motions transmitted up into me. Then I've been instructed to lubricate the tube with mineral oil so it does not bind and stick inside me causing pain and irritation. Today I'm to start taking a new pill which supposedly strengthens the bladder's ability to force fluid out past the prostate. I find that a rather improbable ability.

So I'm now learning to live with a plastic Peter tube and no milk products from the dairy state! No pizza! No ice cream! No regular quick and easy morning cereal! With Milk! No cheesecakes! No whipped cream! No butter! I ordered french toast in a coffee shop and they drenched it in butter and I got the shits even though I whipped off all I could see. Then this last weekend Mike and I drove to Chicago for the B.W.M.T. Cajun Mardi Gras dinner party. I got the shits Sunday A.M. just from the cheese on the delicious flambéed tomatoes! It did not look nor taste like cheese to me. I need to get an allergy cookbook checked out at work and read up on some more fun eating. I've eaten more eggs in pancakes and hard boiled in the last month but why worry about cholesterol now? That is the least on my worries!

I went to see the American premier of Damned Tango which has been playing in Poland for a couple years now. They brought the woman director and music director over to put it all director. A very unusual musical/theatrical concept part operatic, stylized sketches, chorus and dancing. Treated psychologically as archetypes and ritualized.

I also went to see the other production at the old Lincoln High School put on by Handsberry-Sands The Black company. They are doing a ragtime, jazz, rhythm and blues show about John Henry and Brer Rabbit and other black folk heroes. A much more fun and entertaining show which featured a couple acquaintances of mine.

Sunday The Japanese retelling of Shakespeare's Lear will be my intellectual challenge at the Rep Theatre. John Kujawski will go with me. Several other new good shows opened and we'll see which I feel up to seeing.

I've ordered a new mattress finally from Sears. I needed a new one last fall but was too financially pressed to do it then. The former tenant is slowly paying up now and the new tenant is paying now. So my hunkering down has gotten me thru O.K.

*Alyn W. Hen*