

A light at the tunnel's end

For a good part of his 74 years, Tom Wilkison has battled spinal back problems. That discomfort, some of it severe, has extended from his neck to his legs.

He believes, now, that those days may be over.

He is philosophical about the physical burden he has borne. "I happen to have one of those backs that afflict 10 percent of the population," he said. "That's the way it goes."

He recalls that he may have gotten a hint or two of what was to come while in his early childhood in Geneva, N.Y.

In third or fourth grade, a hearing test showed Tom had poor hearing. For some unknown reason, his mother took him to a chiropractor.

Over the course of about six months, the Geneva doctor performed a procedure on his upper neck.

The chiropractor explained there were a couple of inter-connected bones that had slipped and that was the cause of his poor hearing. Tom had another hearing test after about six months and his hearing, to the surprise of the audiologist, was much improved.

Tom spent 20 years in the U.S. Navy, retiring from there in 1982.

Back in civilian life, and employing skills made available to him in the Navy, he was hired by a company that, due to multiple acquisitions over multiple years, became part of Raytheon.

After 23 years, he retired and launched his own company doing the same work he had done with Raytheon.

He believes his back problems began in earnest when, in the Navy, he "threw his back out" during a softball game. "I think it all started there," he said.

Then, in the closing years of his Navy service, he had been doing a lot of running, including a marathon. He had to call that quits because of increasing lower back pain.

In the late 90's, the lower back pain began to interfere with his work, forcing him sometimes to take as



The Cianci Chronicles

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much as a week away from the job.

"To heck with this," he finally said. In 2000, he went to an orthopedic surgeon and had the first of three spinal fusions in the lower back.

With continuing discomfort and with the lower back pain radiating into his legs, he underwent surgery again in 2012 -- this time two side-by-side fusions at the same time.

Tom and his wife, Suzanne, live in Cambridge, coming to the Eastern Shore eight years ago from their former home near BWI. (They moved there when BWI expanded its runway network and the planes began flying directly over their home.)

Then in April 2016, Tom experienced an excruciating neck pain. He thought for sure he would have to have orthopedic work done on his neck.

His wife, coincidentally, had been receiving chiropractic care from Dr. Christopher Cianci in Easton. In May, Tom, running out of alternatives and recalling those visits to the chiropractor in Geneva, N.Y., joined her.

Dr. Cianci noted that Tom was having severe neck and shoulder pain, bilaterally on his first visit. He had recently consulted a spinal surgeon and he had brought with him a recent cervical (neck) MRI.

The MRI, Dr. Cianci explained, showed advanced degeneration and arthritic changes. There were spurs

on his spine and some stenosis, he added.

"Tom was hopeful that he could avoid another spinal surgery. Our evaluation showed he should respond well to our care," Dr. Cianci said.

Tom Wilkison is beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel.

"Chris works my neck, my back, my hips, I very seldom experience the discomfort I did before. I feel a lot better. He's making me well again."

Dr. Cianci had these comments.

"Despite his history and despite multiple spinal surgeries, Tom is a good example of a patient being able to respond well to an appropriately applied care plan.

"A post surgical patient is challenging and prospective patients should be sure the doctor they seek for care has the experience and clinical training specific to the post-spinal surgery of that patient.

"I will see six to eight patients each day who have already had various spinal surgeries. The surgeon often fixes previous issues, but years later there are often setbacks and compensations that the post-surgical patient will suffer.

"More and more surgeons are electing not to do repeated operations. The latest research does not support it.

"I can only encourage patients with similar afflictions to follow Tom's example and seek chiropractic care.

"Tom was adamant that he be able to still enjoy his work a couple of days a week and to be able to fish, which he loves.

"He said he and Susanne moved here to enjoy the Eastern Shore and we are doing our best to help them do just that."

(Cianci Chiropractic can help keep you on a healthy path. Schedule a private meeting with the doctor or attend the free bi-monthly Wednesday evening health seminar. Contact Cianci Chiropractic at 410-820-4070. You can also find Cianci Chiropractic online at www.drcianci.com.)

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