Of late, I am having enormous toileting challenges. TMI. I know. (See Musings in CST May 2014 edition. Do you see a trend?)

I am post op from Friday’s surgery on my left hand for “arthritis at the base of the thumb” – bone on bone on bone. No cartilage. No space. Nothing. Hurts like hell. Plus, you drop stuff “cause your grip is gone.” LH has often told me to “get a grip.” Somehow, I don’t think that’s what he meant.

Prior to surgery, I figured I would need a sling. Not going to catch me in an ugly as sin orthopedic one. Appearance is everything. I Google “fashionable arm sling” and low and behold discover CastCoverz. They not only make a virtual wardrobe of slings, but cast covers for every taste and occasion. Who knew? I immediately ordered a black sling with skull and crossbones. Gotta have some fun with this. Cause it ain’t gonna be fun. No way.

Never being one to overlook the potential for a fashion statement, I determined that I also need cast covers. Didn’t know I needed them until I learned that they existed. I ordered three.

Back to post op: It’s been 24 hours. My arm is wrapped from the elbow to my fingers in so much gauze that it looks like a Q-Tip on steroids – feels like a ton of bricks. LH, a.k.a. “Nurse Ratched,” is my caregiver. We’re staying ahead of the pain. (Does that include him?) He wakes me every four hours to administer Percocet – whether I think I need it or not. Actually, I can’t. I think. I’m in my happy place. This is really good stuff.

LH helps me out of bed to the potty. Walls are moving. My legs are rubber. He holds me up – supporting me on my lap. Page him when I’m finished.

“I am post op from Friday’s surgery on my left hand. At least I had drugs for the pain. Happy this was not an emergency.

Pulling pants down was a walk in the park. Pulling them up – a whole other deal. I manage to get them as far as my knees and I’m stuck. I shuffle out of the stall with them puddled at my ankles and holler for LH to come help.

Close your eyes (after reading this) and picture: LH enters the ladies room. He faces me with his back to the entry door. He puts his arms around me holding me close as he inches the back of the pants up. Then the front. Then the back. And he’s tugging. And I’m gyrating. Helping.

I envision someone walking in and being horrified – assuming that what we were doing was not what we were doing. This could have been pretty romantic if it wasn’t so side-splittingly funny.

I’ve had several debilitating accidents and surgeries over the years. But I could pull up my own pants. There were the mastectomy and reconstructive surgeries that were no picnic. But I could pull up my own pants. Came home on crutches from ski trips. But I could pull up my own pants. And the time I ripped up my ankle at the Temple of the Heaven in Beijing and came home on crutches. Again. But I could pull up my own pants.

Go have thumb surgery. Try pulling up your own pants. Let me know how it goes.

In a moment of weakness (musta been the drugs talking) I went back online and ordered two more cast covers. Overkill, you say? Do you wear the same shirt every day? Well, I’m not about to wear the same cast cover! And I can use them when I do the other hand. If LH doesn’t shoot or divorce me first. ‘Cause if he does, how in the world would I ever be able to pull up my pants?

And then, there’s showering. Try doing that alone. You can wash one arm pit. How do you wash the other? Which hand holds the shampoo bottle and which hand do you squirt it into when you are working as a one armed paper hanger? LH slips my arm into a plastic bag (the ones that the Republic come in when it rains are perfect) and then carefully slides a pair of rubber bands (the ones that the Republic arrive in when it’s not) to the top to seal it. I now know why I kept my subscription. He helps me into the shower. And joins me. When we married 45 years ago this was pretty sexy. Today, not so much.

And, there’s grooming. LH was my hairdresser, “Monsieur Lucky Pierre.” Complete with accent. He shampoos my hair in the shower and towel dries it with such enthusiasm you’d think he was polishing a bowling ball. Good thing I didn’t get whiplash. He was the holder of the hair blower while I contorted with a round brush. I directed him. Blow it over here. No, here.

The back of my hair looked like a little old lady’s. Flat. Scalp visible. LH called to my attention (repeatedly) that I had a hole in my head. Well, (1) I couldn’t see it so it was fine with me; and (2) I’m on drugs so I really don’t care.

I can do nothing.

Putting on pantyhose? Faggetaboudit. Only women of my generation wear pantyhose anymore anyway.


Take the top off anything small? Teeth work well here.

Screw or unscrew anything of size? Teeth not a good idea unless considering tooth restoration, in which case clamp and have at it. Thighs may work. Opening “kid proof” tops? Just take a hammer to it.

At ten days, we’ve got cabin fever. Gotta get out. LH fashions a Rube Goldberg contraption from a beach towel and rubber bands to prop my arm up when we go out to dinner or the movies.

He researches sweater clips on the Internet and then fashions a neat device out of a rubber band and binder clips to keep my jacket from falling off my left shoulder. He’s really into rubber bands. My thumbs don’t work. I can’t squeeze the clips. LH to the rescue. He resides in rescue mode.

Goes with the Y chromosome. He’s got to “fix” it. My darling LH!

He sits. He waits. Lest I need help with ANYTHING. It’s adorable. IT IS DRIVING ME CRAZY.

At least I can wipe my own butt. There are definitely some things that can test a marriage – no matter how good it is.

Hope H. Ozer is founder and Publisher Emeritus of CITYSunTimes. Her monthly columns previously written as “Publisher’s Pen” range from personal – some humorous, some poignant – to observations on life, and continue to be one of CST’s most enduring features.