

MY BEAUTIFUL COLONOSCOPY

By Shepherd Hoodwin

July 31, 2024

It was a lovely day for a colonoscopy. The sun was shining, with temperatures near 80. But there were dark clouds hovering over my large intestine.

The night before, I set out to down three liters of the required lemon-flavored sludge, leaving one liter for the morning. But after two, I could not drink any more. I felt like I would damage myself if I did. I figured I'd finish the other two in the morning.

I braced myself for a terrible night. I frequently wake up as many as five times a night to pee, but now, I expected to spend half the night on the toilet as well, since many people do before a colonoscopy. Instead, I only peed once or twice, and had a better-than-average night, never feeling an urge to sit on the toilet. Odd. Where did that half gallon of liquid go? I wasn't especially bloated, either, and hadn't gained weight in the morning. Had I somehow transmuted it, like water into wine—sludge into air?

Later, a nurse would say that before her recent colonoscopy, she had felt the urge immediately, not having to wait until finishing the three (or in my case two) liters. I'm still not sure why that didn't happen with me. I've been dieting and maybe there wasn't much to come out. And every body is different.

Even in the morning, after finishing the other two liters, I only toileted twice. (Yes, it's now a verb. I am a trendsetter.) The directions said that one's final toilette needed to be clear or yellow. Mine was brown, which is okay for UPS but not for pre-colonoscopy toilettes. I phoned the GI department. They said to consider canceling if that didn't happen by 12:30, because with a dirty colon, they wouldn't be able to see and I'd have to do it again, my body enduring risky anesthetics twice. But I figured I'd have another toilette, a clear-ish one, in time, after having drunk a lot more water, and was guided to keep the appointment.

The nurse doing the intake was really concerned, though. I had been a bad boy not to force myself to follow instructions and drink the whole three liters the night before. Just then, nature finally called, or perhaps texted, albeit faintly. The nurse (a Filipina whose German name means "warrior maiden," which was apt) told me not to flush so that she could see what came out. She checked it and although it wasn't much, she thought it would be okay.

My chiropractor had advised me not to take the sedative Versed, which has been linked to cognitive decline, of which I cannot afford any more. I told them that I would just take the fentanyl to reduce discomfort and skip the Versed, something no one had asked for before. Versed is what knocks you out, so I stayed awake during the procedure and could, at times, watch the screen. The nurse also sang to herself, so I thought of it as a musical. It was surprisingly comfortable and uneventful, with just some jabs from gas moving around.

Fortunately, it was mostly clean, and where it wasn't, the doctor hosed it down and suctioned it. I have some digestive issues and expected it not to look so great—colon walls can be impacted with old gunk—but there was none. The tissue looked pink and healthy. It could have passed for the colon of a hot young Olympian. Were I running for president, I could use photos of that to prove that my biological age made me fit for office despite my occasionally wandering off. I asked the doctor how it compared to others he'd worked on, and he said, "Beautiful." That made my colon feel really good. It started imagining itself on the cover of *Colonoscopy Today*. I've long eaten healthily, including a lot of probiotic foods and supplements, and it has paid off more than I'd realized.

The next recommended colonoscopy would be in ten years, but since they generally don't do them after the age of 75, this was my second and probably last one ever. It was part of my soul's plan to have at least one of those colonoscopies that I'd heard so much about on the astral plane (and who doesn't like a camera up their butt?) so that is now checked off my bucket list.

What other adventures does my continuing slide into decrepitude hold for me? Stay tuned.