

In Sickness and in Health

WAITING TO RAISE HELL

I arranged the covers in front of my face to block out the red, blue and green lights on the various machines monitoring Wifey's vitals. Creating this tiny dark space, I managed to get at least a little sleep during the incessantly interrupted post-knee-replacement surgery nights.

Nurses and CNAs popped in every hour or so to check her pain level, blood pressure and "output." I'd glance over the peak of my bunched-up comforter to check on the expressionless face of my vulnerable darling, who lay in a drugged stupor, under the influence of what otherwise might be a party-mix of muscle relaxers, anti-inflammatories and heavy pain meds.

When her eyes were open I'd wave *hello* across the two feet between her mechanical bed and my cushioned window seat, and she'd reply by raising her index finger with the pulse-ox clip on it back at me. Even that tiny gesture took effort. But we like to stay in touch.

We're already very close — one of those ooey-gooley merged couples still in love after all these 29 1/2 years together. This rehab period is even more hyper-intimate. I'm so attuned to the minutiae of my spouse's needs, I've barely even thought of the world beyond our cozy nest. Winter weather and political insanity make it easier to withdraw, but normally I'd be out there raising hell, especially now.

Priorities have a way of asserting themselves. When the rest of the world was marching in pussyhats, I was helping Wifey into her clothes and driving her home from the hospital. While resisters have been organizing, volunteering and calling elected representatives, the two of us have been cocooned in our own private little world, focused on pain management, icing, elevation, PT exercises and that all-important output.

That and sleeping.

Our first, sleep-deprived night home, I crashed so hard Wifey couldn't wake me to switch out her ice pack. Our actual bedroom is up a flight of stairs, an Everest to the freshly post-opped, so before she went under the knife, we set up the air mattress for me downstairs, just steps away from the guest room *cum* infirmary.

After unloading the car and getting the patient situated I was so exhausted, I flopped onto the camp bed conked out. Wifey tried the little bell on the bed stand. Nothing. She tried yelling. Nada. She phoned me, still zilch. She ended up having to drag her tender, dopey self out of bed and hobbled on wobbly crutches to my bedside crying. I have to believe this because she wouldn't lie, but I was totally oblivious. It wasn't until she walloped the airbed with her crutch that I finally woke up.

That was two weeks ago. Now that she's getting through the night without needing me to help her with meds or pillows or ice or anything, I'm caught up on my sleep. She's improving every day, but as long as she's still on the narcotics, she can't be alone. Friends have brought us soup, groceries, and flowers. They've come to sit with her so I can get out for a walk, or a swim, or a Costco run. Other than that, and our Monday/Wednesday/Friday trips to physical therapy, we haven't been interacting with anyone else, or tuning in to the world beyond the knee.

That's okay. I'm enjoying this sweet time, just the two of us lying low and hunkering down beneath the chaos. When she's healed, I know we'll be doing our part. For now, we're cuddled up watching *M*A*S*H* reruns and working on flexion and extension. And output.

Award-winning writer Sally Sheklow has kept EW readers apprised of her personal life since 1999.



The Shedd Institute

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The Shedd Institute
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**CLARINET
MARMALADE**

Thu, Feb 9, 7:30 pm - cabaret seating

Sun, Feb 12, 3:00 pm - concert seating



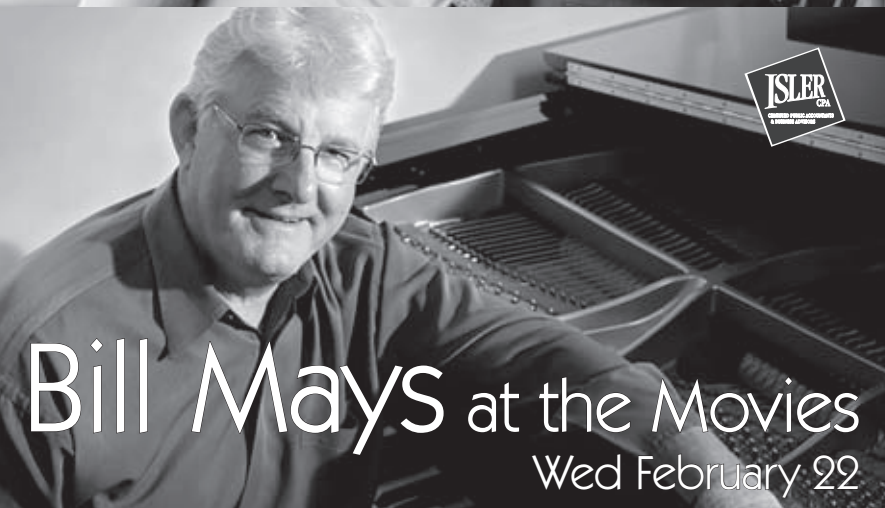
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In memory of
Jean Glausi
1937-2015



The Tony Glausi Sextet
Friday February 17



Bill Mays at the Movies
Wed February 22



Villalobos Brothers
Wed March 1

Coming up next at The Shedd

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| 3.2 Tommy Casto & The Painkillers | 3.23 Keola Beamer & Jeff Peterson |
| 3.3 Jake Shimabukuro | 3.24 Davina & The Vagabonds |
| 3.9 Chuck Redd | 3.30 Ana Popovic |
| 3.19 MTTA: Puttin' On The Ritz - | 4.6 Carl Woideck: Miles Davis |
| The Songs of Irving Berlin | 4.14 Honey Whiskey Trio |
| 3.21 The Shedd Choral Society | 4.15 A Night of Vocal Arts |
| 3.22 Dervish | 4.20 Vasen |