

Dr. Lynn Voss  
The Mapleton Center  
311 Mapleton Avenue  
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Dear Dr. Voss,

I was a trauma patient of yours, a year ago today. I was thrown from a horse with my daughter. I hyper-extended and tore open my right arm and fractured the radial head (and made sure to fill the wound with dirt and straw for good measure). I lay on a trail this way for 45 minutes before an ambulance could get me from Nederland and transport me to Boulder, so it had been a couple hours by the time you saw me. You cleaned it extensively, bolted on a fragment of the radial head that you found behind my tricep as a 'spacer' and then packed the wound with antibiotic beads for 48 hours. You later repaired all that was torn as best you could. You were not sure that my ring/little fingers would work because of the nerve damage. There was a question of how well my bicep was attached, but you assured me that the brachialis could let the arm function. After a few more days of antibiotics, I was sent home to Tampa to be followed by Florida Orthopedic Institute.

My FOI doc, Alfred Hess, complimented the your work based on the films, but reiterated what you had said about the bone not likely to actually 'heal' due to the time the partial piece was floating behind my tricep. I was still at risk for osteomyelitis. I began the painful physical therapy shortly after, five days a week.

To make a long story short, I recovered almost fully by the end of October. The bone has 'filled' the spaces. I have complete range of motion, flexion, extension, supination and pronation. I am slowly building strength, and can curl 12 lbs X30 now (previously did 20 lbs). All my fingers work well. At FOI, your work became a topic of conversation during my visits, as people crowded into my exam room to see where my bone filled in, to gawk at this wicked scar where my arm tore, and see the full range of motion. "You had an excellent surgeon! – and this bone growth is awesome!" said my doc, "How did you do it?" I considered describing my daily 30-minute ritual of visualizing phagocytosis of bacteria and osteocytes laying down bone. But then I thought he might think I was nuts so I just told him I wished for it, really, really hard.

The only significant lasting problem I have had (besides the obvious sensation issues as my nerves regenerate in my forearm) is psychological. Apparently, even when everything comes out well in the end, the *experience* of lying on a trail wondering if - a) your children will remember this as the day you died, after bleeding to death or b) your are about to lose your right arm – is enough to cause an acute stress disorder (normal) which can extend to longer than 3 or 4 months as post-traumatic stress disorder (not so normal). During my physical therapy, I had a number of conversations with a group of firefighters that almost died trapped in a fire, who were having the same problems with stress disorder – we were having terrible dreams, re-living the 'scene' over and over during waking moments, severe insomnia, heightened startle response (I had trouble riding in a car without outright panic) – but no one during our recovery ever asked us about how we were doing mentally – there is so much focus on the physical. I didn't receive long-term follow-up care from you, but I wanted to let you know my experience, if this ever comes up with your patients. I have no doubt that having sought out and received counseling on my own helped me tremendously in my physical recovery. I know time will eventually heal this wound as well.

And so I want to thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for allowing me to touch my children's faces, hold my husband's hand, pet my dogs, body surf in the Atlantic, slice ripe summer tomatoes with a chef's knife, and paint with watercolors.