

DICK ELLIS

On Wisconsin Outdoors

To stay in the field

It's true that youth is wasted on young people. We don't understand that until strength and health and the certainty that we will live forever become aches and pains, and then limps and grimaces and something worse than death ... the idea that our Wisconsin field time is threatened.

For decades I have carried a portable treestand on my back to get to the deer of northern Wisconsin in the black of pre-dawn; the farther back, the better. You know those migrating September brown trout that rise from the dark pools on Superior tributaries after the long journey through no-man's land? I know them too. But these places have been harder and harder to reach.

I don't know when this Baby Boomer's hip started to ache, but I'll bet it's been a decade. I don't know if this arthritic-like pain is ultimately a hereditary thing or simply a result of some injury. But I do know that hunting and fishing partners had asked me more and more if I knew that I was limping. And I do know that pain threatens time in the cold current and time on the stands in the places back where we really want to be. Pain is an enemy of getting there—and staying there.

Orthopaedic Surgeon Dr. Nicolas Webber walked into the St. Luke's Hospital appointment room after the 2013 deer season holding my x-ray and introduced himself to Lori and me. "Tell me about your hip," he said, and I took that minute. "Your hip," he said then, "is horrendous."

I liked this young surgeon immediately, despite the fleeting thought that he was really just impersonating a surgeon and was in reality skipping out of high school; that happens when the 55 year-old patient scrutinizes the 35-year old expert. After a

detailed explanation of why the pain was chronic and why a full hip replacement was necessary, Dr. Webber said two things that fell over me like a comforting affirmation that just maybe the far-back journeys were also far from over. "I will approach this surgery as if you were my older brother," he said. (I could be his father.) And this: "We get excited about this surgery for a young man like you who is so active; we're about to open the door on a whole new world."

The doctor said I could climb trees with this hip, and, in fact, I could virtually do everything in the field again in six weeks. With the 2013 deer season a recent, and painful, memory, and intent on walking the steep ridges of southwest Wisconsin by the 2014 spring turkey season, I was on the surgeon's table the day after Christmas. A sign of the times, Lori was given updates from the surgical team via iPad and shown photos of the operation on Webber's cell phone post-surgery. I was on my feet with the help of a physical therapist and a walker within hours and out of St. Luke's Hospital two days after surgery.

The home care nurse from Aurora began her visits, and exercises to strengthen the hip were undertaken twice daily. Walking became a manageable task. The basement flight of stairs became a tool that was soon negotiated with little trouble. The walker was discarded at two weeks. No cane, and decreasing pain, followed at three weeks. I was on the walking trail in my hometown, carefully, at four weeks, logging a mile. And, don't tell the good Doctor this, but I chased the cabin fever Micah wore like his collar by chasing ... carefully... pheasants in the snow at Wern Valley at five weeks. As I write this, tomorrow is my six week follow-up visit with Dr. Webber. I'm think-

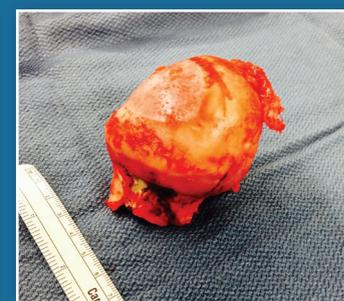
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No cane, no pain. Five weeks after total hip replacement surgery on December 26, Dick Ellis and Micah hunt Wern Valley in Waukesha.



The x-ray of the hip-joint should resemble a smooth, porcelain-like ball and socket, Surgeon Webber said. "Ellis' appeared like a worn, oblong pinecone sitting within a scarred misshapen rut. His hip was as bad as they come." The new hip provided pain-free field work in less than six weeks.



Goodbye to the worn and oblong hip socket bone.

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ing of bringing a valentine, maybe the red and oblong discarded socket bone of my left hip. Lori gets the flowers.

There is no pain in my hip and ebbing pain in the muscles cut to complete the hip replacement. But I know thousands of Wisconsin hunters and anglers do hurt today. We're rusty; we've logged miles on the odometer. In the year before my own surgery, I have watched friends, brothers

and my father-in-law—aged 40 to 78—find new knees, new shoulders and new hips. They're hunting without pain again. I highly recommend it and you deserve it, but only after you do your homework to find the right surgeon.

Anyway, it's true. Youth is just too valuable to waste only on young people. The door is indeed waiting to open again on the world of Wisconsin's outdoors.

Should you be knocking? *OW*

Well, Yes

... My doctor is an Aurora doctor

There can be advantages to knowing the right people. Maybe you land occasionally on the 50-yard line at Lambeau or backstage on the main stage at Summerfest. Maybe that waitress gives you the double scoop treatment on a single scoop ice cream order.

Me? I didn't fall over dead.

Nick Turkal, MD has been my Aurora family physician at St. Luke's-Milwaukee for more than 25 years, with a lot of help from Nurse Practitioner Becky Schultz. Under their guidance, I'm still standing after thyroidism, an aortic aneurysm that would have killed me without referral, diagnosis and emergency surgery, and everything in between when life happens.

When Turkal was named CEO and President of Aurora Healthcare, I remained one of his patients, with more periodic office visits around his administrative schedule designed to keep him on the edge of family practice. Not only do I reap his medical expertise, his office has been a great place to talk bird dogs and turkey hunting. In addition to her expertise, the Becky bonus has meant that arising personal healthcare needs like total hip replacements will be referred to the right experts.

There are advantages to knowing the right people, and real people. Did I mention it's another good day to be alive, and an outdoorsman in the fields of Wisconsin?

OW

**Aurora Healthcare
President and CEO
Nick Turkal leads
the organization
but also enjoys
working his bird dog
for pheasants and
Wisconsin turkey
hunting.**



NICHOLAS WEBBER, MD, ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON

Putting The Sportsman Back In The Field

New hip means new energy for OWO publisher

I've never shot a trophy buck. I've never even caught a very big fish. I can virtually guarantee, though, that the ultimate satisfaction that a sportsman seeks outdoors is equal to the feeling that a surgeon finds when he helps an outdoorsman get back in the field.

As a Wisconsin native, there is not a season that goes by that I don't enjoy the thrill and jubilation of being in nature doing what I love.

Running in the spring and summer, hiking in the fall, and skiing in the winter are why Wisconsin and I have gotten along so well for such a long time.

When I'm not outside, I am fortunate to have a job that I enjoy just as much as nature: orthopaedic surgery, specifically, joint reconstruction and the treatment of bone and muscle cancer. The goal of most orthopaedic surgeons is to help people return to the things they enjoy. Each of us had different reasons for pursuing our profession. Whether it's an injury we had as a child, an ailment that we saw a family member suffer through, or a deadly condition we are now able to potentially cure, orthopaedic surgery gives each of us the thrill that parallels the bliss a hunter or angler finds outdoors.

I had the fortunate experience to have Dick Ellis come into my office in December 2013. As surgeons, part of our job is to connect with the patient. We are taught to find something in common with the patient and show them that we are human. This was unnecessary with Dick; we had an immediate connection. I knew his goals before he said a word. As I walked in, he smiled, his wife sitting next to him, and it felt more like we were all sitting down to a casual lunch than a doctor's appointment.

I saw him hobble in earlier, and I saw the x-rays. The x-ray of his hip joint was supposed to resemble a smooth porcelain-like ball and socket joint. Rather, Dick's appeared like a worn, oblong pinecone, sitting within a scarred, misshapen rut. His hip was as bad as they come. I tried to hide



**Nicholas Webber, MD,
Orthopaedic Surgeon**

my excitement when he told me his goals were to resume the life of an avid hunter and fisherman.

I found it humorous when Dick asked his wife if he walked with a limp. He did, but like so many tough outdoorsmen in their fifties, these signs of significant arthritis are commonly ignored. I think he felt as though a hip replacement was a surgery for an old man. In actuality, patients who have such significant arthritis

that prohibits them from doing the things that they enjoy are, in fact, ideal candidates for this type of surgery. We discussed this further, and by the end of the appointment Dick was ready to proceed.

Very rarely do I recommend surgery the first time that I meet someone. Often I recommend therapy or an injection, or just time for the patient to comprehend what they are signing up for and to understand the lifelong partnership that they are entering with the person who is making this life-altering recommendation. For Dick, and someone with his goals, I could immediately envision him walking into the field, climbing his treestand and doing so without pain.

We went ahead with surgery on December 26. Dick was walking the same day of the surgery and recently walked in my office without a cane or crutch only five weeks post operatively. Doing the surgery is great and helping people is even better, but seeing the change that we can make in a young person's life by doing what is often thought of as an old man surgery is pure reward and satisfaction.

I probably won't ever know what it feels like to shoot to 12-point buck or catch a trophy musky. However, knowing that Dick can do that now from a treestand (or a boat) with a pain-free hip when he thought those days were dwindling away is thrill enough for this orthopaedic surgeon.

The victory of the hunt can remain the hunters', knowing that modern medical technology can keep them in the field for many, many years. *OW*