

# POLIO PERSPECTIVE

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**To the People Who Think It's OK to Touch Me or My Wheelchair  
Without Asking**

***By Karin Hitselberger***

I was faced with one of the most awkward situations I've experienced yet, and that's saying a lot because I always seem to get in the middle of awkward situations. A stranger legitimately went out of his way to touch me on the shoulder as I was trying to drive down the street in my chair. It was raining, and I was trying to go rather quickly to keep my chair from getting wet. I was being careful though, and I was nowhere near close to hitting this guy or even being in his way, and he decides to reach out, touch me on the shoulder and say, "Slow down there, honey."

Let's not even talk about how patronizing that is. I'm saying it here, and I'm saying it now: **Do not touch me without my permission. Ever. The same thing goes for my chair.**

It happens a lot, though — random people thinking they have the right to touch me or my chair without

asking or even ever speaking to me. Random strangers will pat me on the head as they walk by. Sometimes it's a shoulder grab. People seem to have this really annoying habit of touching me. More often than not, the random awkward touching by strangers is also accompanied by a patronizing comment like, "You're so inspiring," or "You're so brave" or my personal favorite, "You're such a pretty girl." I do not exist as a symbol of bravery or inspiration, and I certainly don't exist to be touched without my permission.

How would you like it if people just came up to you and started grabbing at you without ever asking? It's not flattering. It's not kind. Honestly, it's uncomfortable and sometimes even frightening.

A lot of times people know better than to actually touch me, but the same basic courtesy doesn't extend to my chair. Random strangers in stores and on the Metrorail will use my chair as an armrest or a footrest. People will hang their packages and purses on the back of my chair without asking, as if I'm their own personal coatrack. It's really annoying, and it also makes me feel subhuman.

You wouldn't walk up to someone on the street, or even a friend, and put your feet in their lap or hand them your bags without asking first. But people do that to me all the time. They don't get it. They don't think it's a big deal. They forget that my chair is an extension of me. It goes everywhere with me. It's a part of me. Touching it without my permission is like touching me without my permission. Totally uncool.

The most extreme example I can think of of this situation that I've ever been in was in my ninth grade English class. Some boy stuck his fingers in the holes on the back of my wheelchair handles. I was completely unaware of this, although I thought I'd felt someone touching me. I moved forward to get out of my desk at the end of class, and he fell straight out of his seat. His fingers had gotten stuck in the holes. Everybody laughed. I felt so uncomfortable. Not only was I now unwillingly part of this awkward situation that made me the center of attention, but also somebody had been touching me without my permission.

**If you see me on the street and you don't know me, don't touch me or my chair. If we're random acquaintances, and you don't have my permission, don't touch me or my chair. If we're friends, and you haven't asked first, don't hang your bags on the back of my chair while we're shopping. I wouldn't hand you all my bags and expect you to hold them without at least asking you if it was OK first. Please extend me the same courtesy you expect.**

In the end, that's what this all comes down to: courtesy and respect. It blows my mind every day how people do and say things to me that they would never do or say to me if I wasn't in a wheelchair. If I wasn't in a wheelchair, random strangers would definitely think twice before patting me on the head or grabbing my shoulder. If I wasn't in a wheelchair, nobody would ever consider using me as their own personal armrest or coat hanger. If I wasn't in a wheelchair, these things wouldn't be a common occurrence. In fact, they would probably never happen to me. Why should the wheelchair change everything?

The next time you're about to engage in this type of behavior, I encourage you to think, "Would I do this if this person was not a wheelchair user?" If the answer is no, don't do it. Simple as that.

People want all these rules for how they should interact with wheelchair users, and I'm going to boil it down to one for you right now. If you wouldn't do it or say it to somebody who's not a wheelchair user, don't do it or say it to me.

I'm not your pet you can just touch without asking. I'm not a coat hanger you can hang things on without permission. I am a person, and I deserve to be treated as such.

# **EIGHT SIMPLE RULES FOR GETTING ANYTHING YOU NEED FROM ANYONE. (Sans teeth...)**

*by Dr. Richard L. Bruno*

When I picked up the phone, Jason sounded desperate. Jason has CP and has always walked by leaning heavily on two canes. As a result of decades of wear and tear, he developed severe arthritis and rotator cuff tears in both shoulders. Most days it's hard for him to cross the room because of excruciating pain. His doctor told him the pain and muscle tears were going to get worse--that rotator cuffs and shoulder replacement surgeries were on the horizon--unless he got a power wheelchair.

Although Jason's doctor had sent the proper paperwork to his insurance company, a Medicare HMO, the wheelchair was denied because it was "not medically necessary."

"Not medically necessary?!" Jason screeched into the phone. "When will it be medically necessary? When I can't walk at all?"

Sadly, the answer is yes. But I'm getting ahead of the story. Because Jason's speech is hard to understand, he asked me to call the insurance company to try to get him a power chair. In the process I discovered that there are Eight Simple Rules for getting anything you need from anyone.

## **Rule #1: Get Name, Rank and Phone Number.**

First I called Jason's insurance company. After spending a turtle's lifetime on hold I was connected to a "customer representative." I tried to explain my friend's circumstance, but she said she couldn't talk to me because I wasn't "the insured" and hung up.

I was massively ticked! Back on the phone, and after another turtle's lifetime, I was connected to a different representative. This time I said that I was Jason and wrote down her name, phone number and title. All she did was repeat what Jason knew -- that the wheelchair was denied because it was not medically necessary. With an edge in my voice I asked who made that decision. She told me that she was not allowed to give out that information. I asked who could. She said that I would have to speak to her supervisor, Ms. Carbuncle, and that she would transfer me. Before she did, I got Ms. Carbuncle's phone number--and good thing! I wasn't transferred; I was disconnected.

## **Rule #2: First Do Your Homework.**

Since it was 5:00 p.m., I decided to do some research first and call Ms. Carbuncle the next day. On the Internet I found the Medicare regulation for power wheelchair medical necessity. It turns out that a power chair is considered medically necessary only if you're "bed or chair confined," not Jason's situation--yet. I then got the name and phone number of the president of Jason's insurance company and went to the Web sites for Jason's state Department of Health and insurance commissioner to find out what process insurance companies must follow if they deny medical equipment. I also decided with my next calls I would keep dated notes of my conversations and take exact quotes.

### **Rule #3: An Ally Is Better Than an Adversary.**

At 9:01 the next morning I called Ms. Carbuncle. Instead of screaming as I wanted to, I decided to take a different tack: I tried to get her on my side. I started by saying, "Ms. Carbuncle, are you the only one who can help me." I told her that two of her representatives had hung up on me (hoping a little guilt would soften her up) and explained the situation. She apologized and I told her I needed to know who had denied the power chair. Pleasant as you please she volunteered that she had denied the chair. Ah ha! I had her! Victory was mine because my homework had uncovered that state law permits only a physician to deny medical equipment. When I told her this she stammered and said she was sure that a medical director, a physician, had ultimately signed her denial. When I asked for the medical director's name and phone number she said she was not allowed to give out that information. However, she said she'd transfer me and (you know what's coming) I was disconnected.

### **Rule #4: Go Right to the Top!**

It was clear I was getting nowhere talking to the hired help. So my next call was to the president of the insurance company--let's call him "Robert Bucks." Of course I didn't get Mr. Bucks on the phone, I got one of his "personal assistants." Starting again with "you are the only one who can help me," I quickly explained the hang-ups, the denial by a clerical worker and the refusal to let me talk to the medical director. I calmly said, "This certainly sounds like 'bad faith' on the insurance company's part." Invoking "Bad Faith" flips insurance companies out because it means legally that the company has no intention of fulfilling the contract it has with you, the premium payer. State insurance commissioners love clear-cut bad faith cases since it's a combination of fraud and the theft of your premium.

The assistant sounded shocked, concerned and a little frightened. He apologized and confirmed that indeed only a medical director can deny a wheelchair and gave me the name and number of the medical director assigned to the case.

### **Rule #5: Be a Name Dropper.**

I immediately called the medical director's office and got his secretary. I asked to speak to the doctor and was told that "insureds" were not allowed to speak to the medical director and was asked how I got the number. I said that I had just spoken to "Bob" Bucks, told her that he was the one who gave me the doctor's number and told me to call him directly. Implying that "my buddy Bob" told me to call me through to the medical director in a flash.

The doctor explained that he had indeed signed the denial based on the Medicare regulation that required someone to have "severe weakness" in the arms, be unable to push a manual chair and be "bed or chair confined" before a power chair could be approved. I told him that my arms may not yet be severely weak, but that severe shoulder pain prevented me from pushing a manual chair and that shoulder degeneration would soon make me bed- or chair-confined if I kept walking. With the Medicare regulation in front of me I then quoted another paragraph saying "a patient who uses a power wheelchair is usually totally non-ambulatory." I suggested that the word "usually" gave him some leeway, since it means not everyone who gets a power chair is bed- or "chair-confined." To my amazement the doctor actually listened! He agreed the shoulders would just get worse and that I would eventually be bed-confined without a power chair. To my surprise he said, "Tell your doctor to write a prescription and an appeal letter explaining that your shoulders are falling apart, that you can't push a manual wheelchair and soon won't be able to walk. I can argue that it would be better to give you the power chair sooner rather than later and save your shoulders."

## **Rule #6: Don't Ask: TELL!**

Ecstatic, I called Jason. I explained that his doctor only had to send a prescription, write a letter, and the power wheelchair was his. Buy Jason hemmed and hawed. He said his doctor was very busy and that hadn't liked filling out the insurance forms for the wheelchair in the first place. I told Jason he needed to advocate for himself. I told him he needed not to ask but to tell his doctor -- quietly but firmly -- that "he was the only person who could help" and to write that letter. Indeed, Jason's doctor was not happy, but write a letter he did. Within two weeks the power wheelchair was approved. I was king of the world...until Jason called me a month later.

## **Rule #7: Call in the Marines!**

Jason told me that he was greeted one morning by a truck driver with a huge box. Inside was the promised power chair. Jason's excitement gave way to confusion and anger when he discovered the wheelchair was twice as wide as he was. I asked him how this could have happened when he had been fitted for the chair. Jason told me the wheelchair's delivery was a total surprise because he had never been fitted.

I immediately called the medical director to find out what had gone wrong. The doctor coolly explained that the insurance company provides only one type of power wheelchair from only one manufacturer. When I told him the chair had never been fitted and was too wide, the doctor's response was as simple as it was final: "We had a doctor's prescription." Click.

The doctor's answer was not only ridiculous, it smelled way bad. Why would an insurance company provide only one type of power wheelchair that was drop shipped from another state without being fitted? I called Jason's state insurance commissioner and was told that insurance companies cannot provide only one brand of wheelchair, that wheelchairs are indeed custom items that must be fitted. I was referred to the state Department of Health office overseeing HMOs and heard the same thing. For good measure I called Jason's state attorney generals' office. What the insurance company was doing smelled bad to everybody. And, since this was a Medicare issue, I even called Jason's congressman. Turned out that the insurance company and wheelchair manufacturer were under federal investigation for--guess what?--receiving kickbacks from that wheelchair manufacturer.

I once again called my buddy the medical director. I told him about all the offices I had just called and--my voice calm and even--explained that everyone believed that his insurance company was involved in a kickback scheme with the wheelchair manufacturer that broke bushels of state and federal laws. I told him that it wasn't my idea to testify against him in court or to speak at the television press conference, but that I'd do what the attorney general asked if it would get me a usable wheelchair.

**Rule #8: One White Lie Is Worth a Thousand Truths.**

Of course, no one I talked to had mentioned court or a TV press conference. But the medical director didn't know that and there was no way that he was going to find out. What was he going to do, call the attorney general and ask whether he was going to be indicted? Which is why I heard the doctor's voice rise an octave when I mentioned broken laws and television.

"No, no, no!" he said. "You must have misunderstood me." He quickly explained that the brand of wheelchair that was shipped was the company's first choice, not the only choice, and that of course every patient's wheelchair should be individually fitted. He told me that the insurance company would arrange for the wheelchair to be returned, that a local vendor would be in contact and that any brand of wheelchair that met "my" needs would be provided.

And, true to his words, within a week the offending wheelchair had been removed and Jason was fitted for a chair that met his needs. Jason and his shoulders are now happily rolling along.

### **God Bless Alexander Graham Bell**

Since helping Jason I have told others about "The Eight Simple Rules" and how they have proved helpful in dealing with everything from refusals by employers to provide reasonable accommodation under the ADA to reversing denials for Social Security disability.

The phone can be a powerful weapon. Don't be afraid to call anyone and everyone who could possibly help you. State officials, congresspersons and senators love to help constituents (read: voters). Believe me, nothing focuses the mind of a disinterested, self-important government paper-pusher more than the booming voice of a senator on the phone asking, "Why are you abusing my constituent?"

And nothing rivets the attention of any C.E.O. more than the notion of someone in a wheelchair sitting in front of his corporate H.Q. surrounded by television cameras. Most local TV stations have consumer reporters who would love to take on your cause.

Sometimes, however, the pen can be mightier than the phone. You can file official complaints under the ADA, state civil rights and consumer laws, with your state's insurance commissioner and the attorney general. Ultimately, you may need a lawyer specializing in disability or consumer issues when it's time to lock and load and take the bums to court. But, if you follow "The Eight Simple Rules," you may very well get what you need without paperwork or lawsuits by doing your homework, being pleasant but assertive, using your wits and Alexander Graham Bell's marvelous invention.

## **Life Happens**

*by Vicki McKenna*

A piece for my Coffee House friends January 2016. HAPPY NEW YEAR from Scotland! LIFE IS WHAT HAPPENS .....

A while back, when I was new to mobility scooters, I had a slight accident on one of them. As I was getting off the scooter on a busy pavement I foolishly failed to turn off the ignition key and caught my sleeve on the reverse lever. This oversight caused the machine to move rapidly backwards tossing me aside and then running over my legs. Fortunately a passer by stopped the runaway vehicle before anyone else got hurt and eventually my husband hauled me back into the saddle with a stiff ticking off.

But let me rewind --as I lay there looking up at the sky I felt confident of two things --one that I clearly needed to slow down and be more aware of what I was doing and two--this mishap was not what I had planned or chosen! Nonetheless life was happening and was presenting me with a close up view of the kerb. And although I hadn't chosen to run myself over I now certainly had a choice --accept this situation or resist it. Drawing on the Daoist path that has always offered me good guidance I chose to accept --accept the feelings of physical pain and accept the emotional reactions of acute mortification. Thankfully no bones were broken --just a few bruises and a dollop of wounded pride. But by accepting the feelings of pain and embarrassment, going towards them with non resistance, I came to an awareness of a still point of calm underneath the cacophony of sensations and emotion .

As I lay on the ground, in no hurry to get up, I simply accepted where I was and how I felt. Accepting these changes in my circumstances, accepting how I felt about them, encouraged me not to over

identify with the situation and my reactions to it-- not to make a drama out of a crisis but instead align with the still calm Centre that was there all along. Lying on the pavement composing myself is only acceptable up to point -- after checking that I had no broken bones and with encouragement from the small crowd that had gathered I knew it was time to move on. Off I went again—wiser in the ways of scooters!

And then came the day a couple of years later when I comically slipped on a blob of mayonnaise in the kitchen and broke my polio leg. My scooter mishap paled in contrast to this event –a much more challenging scenario but the same Daoist principles applied--when we open to what life has presented to us, accepting whatever it brings and not over identifying with our reactions to the events, we find a still and centred space beneath the turmoil. As I crashed to the floor I found myself in extreme pain and extremely fed up—initially I resisted what was happening but then, as I went towards the pain – yielding rather than tensing I found myself coping better. And I stayed focused on the knowledge that although I had a broken leg I was much more than my broken leg and I could draw on that very real strength.

Daoists refer to everything in the universe as the “ten thousand things” and tell us that from clouds of star dust to human beings, from a speck of sand to the smallest atomic particle –it all comes from one source -- the Dao. The Dao is the wellspring of power generating constant change in the universe. Good times and challenging times, you, me, broken limbs and whole ones --the “ten thousand things” with their constant changes are all the Dao. We are all part of this powerful all inclusive web of life and this is a very real source of strength.

But our minds have a tendency to forget that everything comes from this powerful wellspring that generates constant change! Instead of accepting the “ten thousand things” and going with the ebb and flow of life we tend to see ourselves, our lives, as separate from this ebbing and flowing. Experiencing ourselves as separate we try to control our experiences, impose our will onto situations and become attached to planned, desired outcomes. Then, when things don't go our way we often get stuck in resentments, become distressed and suffer.

What immediately went through my mind when I fell off my scooter, and again when I broke my leg testified to this. My initial reaction was “No!” –I resisted what was happening and wanted another, different outcome –one where I was still seated comfortably on my scooter and in the case of my broken leg one where instead of finding myself in an orthopaedic ward with a full length plaster cast I was sitting comfortably in the living room! This is a natural and very understandable reaction—we want to remain in our comfort zones but denial of reality isn't going to change that reality. Denial, resistance will only lead to getting further mired in the situation –making a full blown drama out of a crisis and prolonging our physical and emotional pain.

We always have a choice. We can choose to cling to our preconceived ideas and argue with reality demanding that life should be different than it is and so feel separate from the Dao and sorry for ourselves, or we can choose an attitude of acceptance –opening ourselves to relax towards reality. Through acceptance of what is—yielding towards what is happening in this moment we relax and thus align with the still Centre of our being. In this way we can get back in the driving seat of our lives. In this way we realise that although we can't control everything that happens to us -- scooter scrapes and mayo mishaps --we can control our attitude towards what is happening.

Use times of trouble as opportunities to accept what life brings and so find stillness—it is this that ultimately brings resolutions, solutions, healing and wholeness. If you find yourself in a painful or

uncomfortable situation try this exercise...

Inhale slowly through your nose and gently exhale through your mouth .Do this several times. As you inhale feel a movement all the way down to the Dan Tien – the energy centre just below the naval. Allow your abdomen to expand as your diaphragm moves down in a full breath, then let your abdomen relax as you exhale completely. Breathe continuously, with no pauses between the exhalation and the inhalation.

Accept the physical sensations and the thoughts and feelings that arise in you and let any tension dissolve away. Now align with the still serene centre that is your Heart. This is our connection with the Dao –the source of life and health and healing. Imagine your serene quiet Heart opening like a rose to reveal a shining white light. Imagine this light embracing everything that comes up in your life. Feel the difficult and challenging situation that you are in embraced by the Light in your Heart. Feel the radiance and tranquillity within your Heart and imagine all conflicts healed and whole within that light in your Heart. Feel the shining white light radiating from your Heart and flowing to every cell in your body bringing health and healing. Radiate the powerful beam outwards towards everyone and everything –the ten thousand things!

## **It's Not What You Know...** *by Millie Malone Lill*

A few months ago my Jazzy power chair started to misbehave. I wanted it to go straight and it wanted to wander off to the left to see if the grass truly was greener on the side of the sidewalk. It also wanted to ponder on things when I wanted to cross the street. Now, I'm not against pondering, no indeed. I just feel the middle of crossing the street is not the most appropriate time for such.

This particular power chair came from Source One in Omaha. They'd been very helpful in the process of my getting it. However, I could not find a trace of this company in Omaha anymore. Apparently, they'd gone out of business. I'd already checked with Home Care Medical Equipment here in Denison when I got this chair. The woman at the desk at that time said they did not sell power chairs, only manuals. I went back there anyway, since there was someone new running that desk. A someone who turned out to be extremely helpful. My favorite kind of person!

Barb, the Woman At The Desk, when told about the problems my chair was having, drove said chair around the room a little bit. She agreed with me that it definitely pulled to the left. Probably needs a new motor. She called her repair man, who told her that new motors are always replaced by twos. That is, if one of the motors went bad, they replaced both of them at the same time. It would cost me about \$2000 plus labor, not sure if Medicare would do that for a 5 year old chair that also needed a couple hundred bucks worth of batteries.

“Let me call someone, “ Barb, my new best friend said. She called someone from NuMotion in Lincoln, NE. Lonnie. She put him on speaker and we both talked to him. He suggested I see if I could get a new chair. He would come to Denison, get a Physical Terrorist, I mean Therapist to join us and we'd see if I qualified. Since I've been using a chair for about 18 years, I was pretty sure I'd qualify.

The appointment was made and I was put through my paces to see if I could use a manual chair...nope...crutches...nope...walker...not a hope. Not enough upper body strength. Surprisingly,

Lonnie, the PT and a young man who was training to be a PT ALL KNEW ABOUT PPS! I was amazed, totally gobsmacked as my English friend Hils would say.

I've always had Jazzy power chairs, under the impression that nothing else was available in my area. Certainly, I'd never been offered anything else. Lonnie suggested a Quickie Pulse 6. Go look it up online, I'll wait. (hmm.hmmm...lalalala) See how much nicer it is than the Jazzy? It has suspension for heaven's sake. Then he asked me which color I wanted. Having only had a choice between red or blue, I was, once again, thrown for a loop when he showed me about 6 different colors this chair came in. Wow! It didn't take me 2 seconds to say PURPLE PLEASE!

It took a few months for the chair to arrive. I called twice to see how the process was coming along. This isn't my first rodeo, so I knew it would take awhile. Both times I called, I got an actual living breathing human being on the other end of the line. Finally an appointment was made for delivery.

A very nice young man showed up with my chair. He checked the width of my door frames and got down on the floor to adjust the foot plate. My little dog, who normally doesn't like just anyone who wanders into her domain, fell in love with him and wanted to kiss him as long as he was within reach. He was very gracious about it, but I picked her up out of his way anyhow.

I am now the proud owner of The Purple Chair of Power! It goes a blistering 6 mph, has the aforementioned suspension, is purple and you will never guess what else. It has a cup holder! Not the cheapie joe holder that sticks out to the side and is guaranteed to break off the very first time you go through a doorway. Oh no, not Purple Chair of Power! It has one that not only sticks straight out in front of the arm of the chair, it swivels, can be adjusted and swings so that when I go over my threshold, the cup stays level instead of slopping hot coffee all over. I bought a purple leopard print seat cover for it and hung my bags on it where they belong. I also zip tied a short length of PVC pipe with a cap on one end to the back of one arm. I covered that 1" diameter PVC pipe with glittery duct tape. Yes, purple duct tape, what did you think? Now when I go out for a toodle, I can put a bicycle flag in that pipe and might avoid getting hit by a car. When I transfer the chair via my lift, the flag slips right out and lays on the floor next to Purple.

Life is good. I can't wait till the weather warms up, the snow goes away and I can take my new chair out for a spin. I can't really open it up in the halls here. A lot of 80 year old people have a problem running faster than 6 mph. While it would be entertaining for a little while, I admit, I like my neighbors and really don't want to terrorize them.

As the title says, it isn't what you know, it's who you know. And now I know Barb, and Lonnie, and Jim the Delivery Guy. They may regret this, but I know I won't.

## WEB CORNER

**Buy and Sell Odd Sized Shoes**

<http://search.oddshoefinder.com/>

**A Wheelchair Didn't Stop Him**

<http://www.transfermaster.com/blog/view-post/A-Wheelchair-Didn-t-Stop-Him-It-Shouldn-t-Stop-You-2>

**What was Polio originally called?**

<http://www.whonamedit.com/synd.cfm/544.html>

**Disability Integration Act Introduced to the Senate**

<http://www.advocacymonitor.com/disability-integration-act-introduced-in-the-senate-urge-your-senators-to-co-sponsor-this-revolutionary-bill-and-free-our-people/>

**A Simple Guide to Booking Hotels for Wheelchair Users**

<http://www.curbfreewithcorylee.com/2016/01/13/booking-wheelchair-accessible-hotels-guide/>

**A Guide to Getting Social Security Disability by Dr. Richard Bruno**

<http://postpolioinfo.com/bruno.php>

**Intelliwheels Starts Letting You Tinker With Your Own Wheelchair Design**

<http://www.transfermaster.com/blog/view-post/IntelliWheels-Starts-to-Tinker>

**Secrets of Taoism, Longevity and Lifestyle**

<http://personaltao.com/teachings/taoism/secrets-of-taoism-longevity-and-lifestyle/>

**A book by Vicki McKenna A Balanced Way of Living**

[http://www.postpolioinfo.com/balanced\\_way.php](http://www.postpolioinfo.com/balanced_way.php)

**The BreatheBB Forum**

<http://www.breathebb.com/>

## **A Little Bit of Humor**

**Dear Mom and Dad,**

Our scout master told us all to write to our parents in case you saw the flood on TV and worried. We are OK. Only 2 of our tents and 4 sleeping bags got washed away. Luckily, none of us got drowned because we were all up on the mountain looking for Jeff when it happened. Oh yes, please call Jeff's mother and tell her he is OK. He can't write because of the cast. I got to ride in one of the search & rescue jeeps. It was neat. We never would have found him in the dark if it hadn't been for the lightning.

Scoutmaster Web got mad at Hector for going on a hike alone without telling anyone. Hector said he did tell him, but it was during the fire so he probably didn't hear him. Did you know that if you put gas on a fire, the gas can will blow up? The wet wood still didn't burn, but one of our tents did. Also some of our clothes. Larry is going to look weird until his hair grows back.

We will be home on Saturday if Scoutmaster Web gets the car fixed. It wasn't his fault about the wreck. The brakes worked OK when we left. Scoutmaster Web said that a car that old, you have to expect something to break down. That's probably why he can't get insurance on it. We think it's a neat car. He doesn't care if we get it dirty, and if it's hot, sometimes he lets us ride on the tailgate. It gets pretty hot with 10 people in a car. He let us take turns riding in the trailer until the highway patrolman stopped and talked to us.

Scoutmaster Web is a neat guy. Don't worry, he is a good driver. In fact, he is teaching brother Doug how to drive. But he only lets him drive on the mountain roads where there isn't any traffic. All we ever see up there are logging trucks.

This morning all of the guys were diving off the rocks and swimming out in the lake. Scoutmaster Web wouldn't let me because I can't swim and Jeff was afraid he would sink because of his cast, so he let us take the canoe across the lake. It was great. You can still see some of the trees under the water from the flood. Scoutmaster Web isn't crabby like some scoutmasters. He didn't even get mad about the life jackets.

He has to spend a lot of time working on the car so we are trying not to cause him any trouble.

Guess what? We have all passed our first aid merit badges. When Rob drove in the lake and cut his arm, we got to see how a tourniquet works. Also Bruce and I threw up. Scoutmaster Web said it probably was just food poisoning from the leftover chicken. He said they got sick that way with the food they ate in prison. I'm so glad he got out and became our scoutmaster. He said he sure figured out how to get things done better while he was doing his time. I have to go now. We are going into town to mail our letters and to buy some bullets.