

## New Vision (2009)

Houston Hodges, for Writer's Corner, WLRH Radio Huntsville, AL USA

My beloved Pat is recovering from her second cataract removal; the first was two weeks earlier, and this excision completes the quartet for both of us: I had one eye done in 1989, the second 15 years later. We won't have to do that again!

The removal of a clouded lens inside the eyeball! -- and its replacement by a cunningly engineered piece of plastic! -- is surely one of the miracles of medical science. Those darkened lenses have been removed since 1748, but replacements have been done for only the past fifty years. Think of the contrast, from days of the past -- for most of human history, one of the dangers of aging was that your vision got darker and darker, then virtually disappeared; you were blind, and took your place in the corner of the chimney and waited for someone to bring your beans and cornbread. You knitted, in the dark, or shelled peas. What a change!

Even in more recent times, cataract surgery was still a big deal: for a long time, it was necessary to immobilize your head -- and thereby your eyes -- by wedging your skull between sandbags, for an extended immobilization, for the delicate surgery to heal. Now -- our Dr. Derivaux proclaims "No shots, no stitches!" There's a numbing gel, and an incision so small that no stitches are necessary. Recovery is much quicker, a couple of days of reduced activity and ten days with "no heavy lifting, or bouncing on the tractor" (that's what the brochure says, honest!) So when Pat was recovering I got to do some reaching for things on the bottom shelf and picking up whatever dropped to the floor (but it was good for me, someone pointed out to me as she lounged on her bed).

They told us that cataractectomy is the most successful and safest of the "day surgery" procedures.

There are some possible (but unlikely) negative aftereffects, so it's modified my travel plans, but surely clearer vision is worth it. And no one I love sitting in the chimney corner.

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