

By James Collins

Walking down the driveway of my son Kevin's property to Sunday dinner, I felt an old familiar tickle on the back of my throat. I thought to myself, *that's great I'm going to get a sinus infection just to finish off this winter.* I should've been so lucky.

The next morning I woke up with a terrible headache and a fever. I was weak as a kitten and decided to stay in bed. Unfortunately as I twisted and turned, my throat filled up with flem and I realized that this would go into my lungs unless I sat up. Sinus attacks, I had encountered before and I used the La-Z-Boy in the family room as a temporary bed. I decided to make use of this asset for this event. I took a blanket and a pillow and went into my family room at the other end of my ranch condominium. I then used it as my temporary bed and this went on for almost ten days.

Living in a one floor ranch has its advantages. The way my ranch is laid out the family room is at one end and you have to pass through the kitchen, the dining room and the master bedroom to get to the main bathroom. When you are weak and drink lots of water to maintain your hydration you make many trips. Luckily, I had lots of food in the house and my neighbors were kind enough to go to the food store for me to bring in many boxes of napkins and tissues. I went through them rapidly and placed them strategically in each of the rooms so that if I needed to blow my nose one was immediately at hand.

The cleaning lady called to verify her appointment and when I told her of the flu I gave her the option to reschedule. She has a few small children and immediately opted to reschedule her visit. Upon hanging up from this call, I looked around and noted that a number of things were out of place and there were napkins on the floor. I reached down to pick them up. Immediately I felt dizzy and feared I was going to fall. I decided not to bend over for anything until the fever went away and the weakness abated.

After two or three days, I looked around and noted the shambles that I had permitted to develop. All around my chair were newspapers and books thrown on the floor, which I could no longer retrieve. On my next trip to the bathroom I noted that there were many items on the floor, a spoon, napkins, newspapers, mail, a couple of pens and notepaper. Some of the more exotic examples were empty medicine jars and a plastic bag from CVS that held the napkins. In fact, there was a continuous line of small items on the floor from my La-Z-Boy to the bathroom sink. I was immediately reminded of Hansel and Gretel and their story about a trip to the woods where they left pieces of bread as a trail so that they could find their way back. My trail had no bread and therefore no birds came along to pick up the mess. After a few more days, I found I could bend over for a couple of

seconds and pick up one or two items. However, I could not do this for more than a very short period. Over the next three or four trips, I was able to pick up a couple of items at different places. Now I stopped and observed the trail, which now look like a dotted line. Three days later, I was able to pick up the entire track and the house began to look livable again.

However, the cough did not go away. My daughter, talking to me over the phone, commented on the fact that my cough was still there. She insisted that I go to my doctor for a checkup. It was there that I found out I had pneumonia. This really rounded out the six weeks. I totally lost the month of February and half the month of March. This may be the winter with the greatest snowfall ever in the Boston area and that is memorable. However, being incapacitated and having 6 feet of snow on your deck at the same time that you have the flu and pneumonia for a six-week period makes this a winter that I will never forget.

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