

SLIP SLIDING AWAY.....

I was born in Scranton Pennsylvania, a coal mining region in the northeast corner of the state, I probably had my first exposure to the toxic world when I stood on a bridge overlooking railroad tracks and inhaled coal dust blowing from the steam engine's bowels.

United States Navy X rays indicated I had a black spot on my lung. While in the navy I served aboard the battleship Wisconsin and was exposed to asbestos contamination. Firing our 16 inch guns frequently loosened huge chunks of asbestos including dust now identified as a possible source of toxic contamination. Further possible toxic contamination traced to my duties as a radar operator.

In the 1980s I was first advised of what turned out to be a classic parkinson's symptom. One morning, walking to work in downtown Los Angeles, I heard a voice calling my name from behind me. When my colleague caught up with me I asked how he knew it was me. His response was "because you always walk like that" He told me my left arm never moved from inside and I always looked like I was about to turn the corner to my right.

In 2006 a dozen other symptoms appeared. Textbooks defined these symptoms as late onset Parkinsons. After reading up on the disease, I was shocked. Not long afterward, I began to face reality. My boyhood dream of "living fast, dying young, and having a good looking corpse" was not going to happen. Instead, I would have to prepare myself to endure an ugly ending to an otherwise successful lifetime.

To counterpunch this devastating blow, I decided to accept it, fight it as best I could, and devote the rest of my life to helping others while seeking better treatment and a possible cure for this deadly disease.

**So here I am,
78 years young,
slip sliding away as a
collaborator for a book
focused on the patient..**

Robert Cummings