



**OK, WE'RE AT THE END OF SOMETHING**, though it feels less like end than the middle. I never expected you to join me, to train with anyone, at the gym. And you did, and you have, and we both like it. I became less strict and you remain mildly stubborn, and with that accommodation, working out alone mostly and together weekly, became as natural as sharing a cup of coffee.

The more I work out, the less I hurt on the job. I gained 10 pounds of muscle, here and there. My shoulders are still whacky and asymmetrical. In fact, my shape got worse as my shoulders grew stronger. Lipodystrophy is a SOB. My outer limbs — knee down, elbow out — remain sapped of size, normal fat, and some strength. Some things don't improve.

During the year, a beloved In-Law has died and an immediate family member will soon follow. I am currently wrapped up much more in family than I like.

I should work out more, but instead I tend to brood over my evermore constricted choices for now and the near future. I absolutely savor my future, the time *after* now.

My eyes long confirm "Jonathan looks different now." I don't, or not much. That's not a big failure. I've got a competitive streak—considering we both worked out— I wouldn't want the results to be in reverse.

Work, tired days, and unknown infections that got

me terribly ill (March 3, 2015 pics) were setbacks. Twice I lost 14 pounds over 6 days but never missed a day of work. Over several weeks, I gained back both the lost fat (Jonathan pointed out my upper arms shrunk) and lost muscle. Then about 90 days later (May 30, 2015 pics): repeat. I lost 15 pounds again, in just as many days.

I wanted to get more flexible in my screwy shoulders, less lopsided, stronger in my bones, surrounded by another 10 pounds or more of muscle.

You have wider shoulders and chest, more muscular arms and thighs, and are generally bigger. Everywhere. I don't ask your body weight. I just use my eye (the camera is another) to see the changes week-to-week. You know all the exercises.

You run gracefully on the treadmill without any encouragement from me. You're fitter and prefer this life to one without exercise.

I did teach you the principles of resistance training and you no longer need me for "attaboys" or suggestions (though you appreciate an occasional compliment). You're self-motivated and — since we're speaking of the gym — this is a surprise. A welcome one.

You've been reading good stuff about illness and culture, from Sontag to \_\_\_\_\_. Just never lose sight that being ill is a direct learning experience. Fighting back is important, but giving in with grace has rewards too. The two are perfectly compatible. We infected are unmasked hosts and sometime

rebels.

Taking stock...You reminded me today that this whole thing was "my idea," and in a way, "Sure." But from documenting me so I might see "before" and "afters" during my experimental return to the gym after nearly 3 years of enforced non-gym-going, it grew.

Making it something bigger was your idea. Seeing this as a collaborative project part of your Bethesda Brotherhood, was yours. In fact, I didn't even understand the connection for some weeks. Taking consistent pictures carefully came from me (imagine that!). And then you took the lead. Soon you added your documentary self, your provocative sissy posing, and what we made is well documented.

It's a fun Saturday routine more than anything, for me. So thanks for the fun way past necessity or noble motive. If you double space this, you'll have a book. That's right, a picture book. My portion is done.

Thanks for the enduring friendship.

Sam

