

“Tuff Guys Don’t Cry... Yeah, Right!”

When I was eight years old, I made a promise to myself that I would never cry again. For decades, I kept that promise working in the maintenance department for the Plymouth School District, doing heavy, physical labor that demanded you toughen up and get the job done.

Now, I’m a straight-shooter and I like to be as honest as can be; but the pain I endured over the last few years caused me to test that “no crying” promise more than once.

My story really started about fifteen years ago—on New Year’s Eve, of all things! I was at work cranking on a pipe-wrench that snapped, sending me flying backward, and I slammed into the corner of a concrete wall with my back. That led to a surgery to remove a bone chip that was pressing on my nerves. At the time, I thought that was the end of it.

Then, three years ago, things became serious. I went in for a checkup because I was on the lung transplant list. The doctor looked at me and said, “Burnie, you’re not going home.” Over the next 17 days, I lost 55 pounds, and nobody could explain why. My condition deteriorated so quickly that I was moved up on the transplant list, and thankfully, a matching set of lungs became available just in time.

I received a double lung transplant and spent nine days in the ICU. But the hits kept coming. Two days after the transplant, I had another major surgery to remove eight inches of my intestines. During that procedure, my vocal cords were damaged and I woke up unable to speak, struggling to recover from two massive surgeries.

Two days after being moved from the ICU, they got me up for my first walk. I had 19 IVs running through me, connected to six different machines. I stood up with a walker—but my body just quit. I passed out, my legs went out in front of me, and I landed hard on my butt.

That fall resulted in two compression fractures in my spine and three broken ribs.

When I came to, I was in a world of pain that would haunt me for the next three years.

It was a nightmare. I was doing therapy in the hospital, but I couldn’t even tell the staff exactly what hurt because I couldn’t talk. Then, once I got home, the real “merry-go-round” started.



I saw multiple doctors and spine specialists, including in Madison. I went to pain management. Everybody just kind of shrugged it off and said there was nothing they could do for my back pain. I was put on heavy opioids like Oxycodone, but that didn’t even touch the pain. Local surgeons wouldn’t touch me because of the transplant—they told me I had to go back to Madison.

I tried everything. I did lots of physical therapy, they burned my nerves, I had 16 injections in my back—twice, and an epidural. Then, the specialists in Madison suggested implanting a spinal cord stimulator. But there was no guarantee it would work, and I’d never be able to have another MRI—which I need twice a year to check on my lungs. I even tried acupuncture for a year and a half just to take the edge off.

By the time I came to the Wisconsin Spine & Chiropractic Center, I was at the end of my rope. I’d been walking with a cane for a year just to stay upright. I’d lost 30 pounds of muscle. I was frustrated, disgusted, and losing hope that I would ever get better.

My wife and I had seen patient stories in the newspaper, and we personally knew two people who had been helped by Dr. Kroneck. They spoke so highly of him that we thought, “We’ve been everywhere else—might as well give him a try.”

I’ll be honest: when I first met Dr. Kroneck, my mindset was negative. I was used to doctors saying, “Oh yeah, this will take care of it,” only to be no better six

months later. But Dr. Kroneck was different. He was upfront. He didn’t promise anything. He told me he couldn’t say for sure whether he could help—but he saw signs in my examination that gave him hope.

That honesty was a breath of fresh air.

His approach was a revelation. There was no forceful cracking or aggressive manipulation. The care was gentle, precise, and intentional. After a few treatments, I realized something else had to change too—my attitude. I decided to be positive.

That’s when I noticed... I wasn’t experiencing severe pain with every single step anymore!

Today, I’m almost back to normal. I’m walking steady and covering longer distances—and I’ve thrown away the cane! I’m active again, shoveling light snow and working out in the woods. I’m doing the “little things” most people take for granted—like getting the mail or taking out the garbage.

Even standing in the shower feels like a miracle! It sounds funny, but when you can’t stand in the shower, you realize how much you really take for granted. For years, we had to book handicap motel rooms just so I could sit down to shower. Now, I can simply stand there.

My wife can’t believe the change. She says I’m nicer, and my sense of humor is finally coming back. When I think about how much better I am—and how much stress it’s taken off her—I almost break that “no crying” promise again. But now, it’s tears of joy.

If you’re in bad shape like I was—disappointed, frustrated, and hurting—I would recommend Wisconsin Spine Center in a heartbeat. Dr. Kroneck and his staff are caring and professional. Thanks to them, I have a life back that I thought was gone forever.

Honestly, the only way they could improve their service is if they moved all their equipment into my house—and I’ve already told Dr. Kroneck I’ve got the truck to haul it!

-Burnie Lorenz