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Heart valve transplants cause serious consequences. The doctors tell you it takes a year to regain your strength and energy. No projections are included how long the family needs to heal from waiting room exhaustion, parking lot contests, and cafeteria burnout.

One outstanding loss affects the memory. Of all the deficiencies, not being able to remember telephone numbers, where your car is parked, or the name of a person keeps you on edge. Nametags become sacred, along with name plates and window signs on office doors and even personalized auto license plates help.

A good knockout line is to have someone jump up in your face with a "You don't remember me do, you?" "No," you think later, "Sis or Bud, I don't remember people I met 40 years ago at the ticket desk at the airport. Something slips away in four decades that took less than 10 minutes to enact."

At a big party four weekends back, 30 or 40 couples danced by the table. I struggled to remember their names. These folks weren't in disguise or costume or wearing masks. All of them looked familiar, but nothing came up on my screen except the agony of being unable to recall their names until they had passed from sight on around the floor.

Now, don't think the problem was from juggling, unless 34 years isn't long enough to recover from your last drink. The ol' grape contains mighty jolts, especially in spawning romance. One shot can turn a mere brush of an elbow by a babe into a 3D love advance in a man's mind.

Back after World War II, when vodka and grapefruit juice salty dawgs were so popular at the country dances, ladies married, engaged, single, or entertaining all three conditions became irresistible after a few snorts from a pickle jug on the tailgate of a pickup.

We speculated that the potato base in the vodka worked like a magic potion. Some of those ol' gals got such a rush at the dance, they wrote off the next morning for Hollywood screen tests.

Potatoes play a big role in our lives. Such a popular staple well could link to human behavior. I know sourdough made from a potato water base knocks the gnats out of formation more than a straight buttermilk recipe.

Just a glance at the skim on the crock tells the proof of the mixture. Also, dead gnats foundered on sourdough roll into a ball that can't be told from sesame seeds.

Along about midway in the dance, a couple passed by who retired 20 years ago from running a laundry route all the way west from Angelo to Fort Stockton. Wish I had kept

the heartfelt card announcing their retirement because of age. The whole town of San Angelo would think age, if they missed going to the VFW dance on a Saturday night.

All the people sitting at the table eventually asked if I had had a rain or a fire. You can't tell city folks that's why you are in town, to forget about the grass fires and the parched grass from dry weather. Lots more goes with dry land cattle husbandry, you know, than humming "Home on the Range" on the ranch house back step at sunset.

Somewhere close by that very night, a hundred head of my calves too young to wean bawled for their mommas from Thursday's sale. We smell smoke in Mertzon every time the wind changes to the west or the south.

Rarely do the kitchen timer or doorbell ring, but when they do, I jump and start hollering "Hello" without picking up the mouthpiece or touching the doorknob. One morning, a kid's pickup backfired at the stop sign in front on the way to the school house. I was out the back door before I realized I only had on one houseshoe and one boot.

Damn that kid, anyway. He's the only one left able to afford peeling out while passing by the house. He's not only a reckless driver, he's a bad influence on the older drivers. The more he races off, the more the adults run the

stop sign. His mother must give him gas money. Cars still park around school, but not to the number in other times.

Ten or 12 couples give this party at the American Legion Hall. They put on a big table full of food. They hire the "Old Hat Band." The leader plays back and forth on his fiddle and French harp.

Always brings tears when the fiddler plays "The Tennessee Waltz" so pretty and sweet or "Ida Red" so wild and beer joint lively. The old laundry guy sure can waltz; but why not, after more than 60 years on the floor with the same partner...