

November 28, 2017

Dear Dr. Janssen,

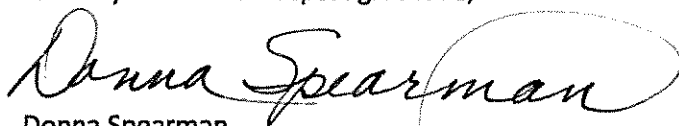
I had a conversation with a friend from high school about 10 years ago. We discussed the “pivotal people” in our lives – those people who came into our lives, by choice or chance, and through their presence changed our directions and outcomes significantly. It occurred to me after my treatment procedure with you yesterday that, while I have shared the pivotal life-changing impact of your presence in my life with many people over these past 21 years, I have never intentionally shared that message with you.

You caught me by surprise yesterday when you said that you were “honored to treat me.” In my mind, I am the one who is privileged to have been referred (on the very first attempt, no less) to just the right, highly skilled, knowledgeable, personable, and caring surgeon for me. I knew from your manner and approach at that very first consultation, way back in 1996, that you were both trustworthy and compassionate and that you would without a doubt be able to see me through all the difficulties and complications of my somewhat unique situation. What I didn’t know then was that you would not only see me through to a better quality of life for many years to come, but that you would do just the same for my precious daughter, Emily.

Our family has a tradition of adding a Christmas ornament to our tree each year – something that is representative of an important event that occurred. While it is a rather unorthodox ornament, 1996 is represented by the Harrington rod that you removed from my spine in that marathon 14-hour-long procedure you so aptly and skillfully performed. Each year as I hang that ornament on the tree (and many other times throughout the year, too), I am reminded of your important contributions to my life – the ability to stand tall, move easily, stay fit, carry my grandchildren, pursue worldwide adventures, and much more, all without pain. And to watch my daughter be able to live a full and rich life unhampered by any detrimental effects of scoliosis.

I turned 59 years old this past October and have begun to move through my 60th year of life. I am attempting to live it to its fullest and fill it with the best possible adventures and accomplishments. Know that as I welcome Emily’s new child into the world in January, and as I walk about London for a week in February, and as I embark on my solo walking adventure through the Swiss Alps in July (and as I hike here in Colorado with my son, Colton, to prepare for that), and as I journey through Israel in October and as I Jazzercise to stay fit throughout the year – I will be giving thanks for the quality of life and the extra layers of richness that your competent and caring contributions have added for me.

With my warm and deepest gratitude,


Donna Spearman