



# Unglued

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## My Father of Invention

As you may recall, I am not at my desk in Salt Lake City these days, but spending time in Atlanta caring for elderly parents. There are days when I wonder, “What was I thinking?” This may be the right thing to do, but what about my business? Since my business is about helping people think creatively and collaboratively, I continually challenge myself to practice what I preach.

So, as I waited endlessly for the eye doctor to examine my father one day this week, I focused on a creative solution to a daily problem – how to get my father into bed at night with minimal physical effort. It’s not that I can’t or won’t make the effort, but I don’t want to develop any practices that my mother cannot do when she finally recovers from her surgery.

Put yourself in Dad’s place, as I did in my thinking process: Imagine that your 84-year-old joints are stiff and you no longer have a lot of flexibility, muscle tone, or strength. Imagine that you must sleep on absorbent pads placed on top of the bottom sheet in case of incontinence and that you must get into bed carefully without shifting the pads too much. Imagine that you have Parkinsons Disease, a “movement disorder” that impairs the neurological messages from your brain to your muscles, and that you have memory problems that cause you to forget how you got into bed just last night. Imagine that remembering how to get into bed, and then doing it, can take up to 30 minutes some nights. Got the picture?

As I pondered this challenge, I began to think of a mechanical device that could be anchored to the floor or to the bed frame that would give my Dad’s legs just a little lift up off the floor as his upper body leans sideways with his head landing on the pillow. Once his feet and legs are lifted to bed height, he can simply roll onto his back and straighten his body. The device I invented in my head could be motorized or possibly spring loaded, with an easy-to-reach switch or trigger to activate.

I think I’m on to something. Now, all I need is a design/engineering partner, a prototype, and some funding. Any takers?

Challenge yourself this month to use waiting time to invent a new solution to an everyday problem. It could turn into your next great business venture.

Sue Martin  
801-209-3062