

Bariatric Surgery Journal of Brenda Kempen

1st Visit with Dr. Weiland (10/05): 335#

Surgery Weight (1/25/06): 313#

12/23/05

Theresa from Dr. Weiland's office called this morning and I have been approved by Wausau Benefits to have Gastric Bypass surgery. I'm feeling such an array of emotions. I'm excited, scared, happy, etc., etc.. We set my appointment with Dr. Weiland for January 12th. We need to bring any last questions, etc. to this appointment. At the end of the appointment we will go out to the desk and pick a surgery date.

1/15/06 Weight - 321

I have my surgery date: 1/25/06! I met with Dr. Weiland on Thursday and he said that if I was willing to start the pre-op diet immediately that he would do the surgery 13 days from then. I didn't have a chance to prepare myself or to eat any "last foods". The diet is hard but I can already feel that I'm adjusting to a routine. I'm definitely going to miss going out to eat but it's forcing me to deal with my feelings. Tomorrow morning I'm going to start a workout routine at Lifestyles gym. I'm looking forward to it but I am also a little nervous.

1/24/06 Weight - 316

Tomorrow is the big day. I can't believe it. It's been a long journey but so worth it. I have decided to let Aspirus follow me through the first 6 months of my surgery to track my progress. We did the first taping today. It bothered me so much to have to say my weight for the whole world to hear. They all said that 6 months from now it won't bother me. It is very important to me that my family and friends (especially my daughters, Brianna and Allison) know that even though this is an elective surgery, I don't feel like I have any other choice left. I am doing this because I love them and I want to be with them as long as possible. We'll see you on the losing side!!

1/27/06 Weight - 313

I made it through!! I had surgery on Wednesday, January 25, 2006. I came home from the hospital on Friday, January 27, 2006. It is so good to be home. The girls were so happy to see me when they got home from school. I'm still a little sore, but I can tell it's getting better every day. Everyone I talk to is so encouraging. I cannot believe how great Pete has been. He has been totally supportive from the very beginning. I didn't realize how much I was going to need him to do. I just keep telling him how much I love him and how sorry I am that he has to go through this. He says that it's ok because we are all going to benefit from it. I don't think I could have done it without him.

1/28/06

It was a tough night. It is 6:30 am and I just want to be able to go to bed and sleep. It hurts to lay down in bed so I sleep in my recliner. I went to sleep around eleven. I woke up at 12:30 and 2:30 to go the bathroom. Just as I was falling back to sleep I woke up with this coughing fit. I had this terrible dry tickle that wouldn't go away. That really hurt my side. We finally decided to try running the vaporizer. So I finally went back to sleep around 4:30. Now I woke up at 6:30 to go the bathroom again. It's starting to get light out and I can't get back to sleep.

1/29/06

I had a little breakdown at lunch today. My family was having pizza, french fries and mini corn dogs for lunch. I was having a ¼ C. of jello for the sixth day in a row. The other food smelled so good that I just don't know how I'm only going to have jello again. After a few tears I gave myself the usual pep talk. It will all be worth it. One more day of this diet and tomorrow will be so much better. I can do this! I watched a show this morning on the Health Channel talking about Bariatric Surgery. They featured a few successful patients. It is so encouraging and exciting to see these people. What the future holds – what this summer will be like. How different it will be. I can't wait!!

2/1/06 Weight - 306

Today my friend Sheila is having her gastric bypass surgery with Dr. Weiland. I have been thinking about her all day. I am one week out today. I'm feeling better everyday. I was able to make it 30 minutes on the treadmill today. My left side still gives me pain. In everything I've read it says this is normal. I have my check up with Dr. Weiland on Tuesday and I'm really looking forward to it. Just to make sure that I don't have any infection and that I'm healing alright. They had pretzels out at work today. They looked so good. I could almost taste them. Don't worry – I was good and passed them by.



Brenda 6 months after surgery



Brenda 6 months after surgery

2/2/06 Weight - 305

I feel I had a set back today. I sneezed and when I did there was searing pain in my left side. Then a burning pain has remained. I finally called Dr. Weiland's office and left a message for Brenda. She left me a voice mail saying that she thought it sounds muscular. She said I should try putting the heating pad on. I'm just so frustrated because I've been doing everything the way I'm supposed to and I just want to feel "normal" again. I'm tired of having to take it slow and needing help and getting tired out. I know it's only been a week but patience is not one of my strong suits.

2/12/06 Weight - 300

I had my two-week check up last week and everything went great. Dr. Weiland said that everything looked good. My weight loss was 26 pounds so far. Brenda said that the pain in my left side sounds muscular. She said that it would probably take another two weeks before it's gone. I met with Margee (the dietician) afterward and we had a great meeting. She was very pleased that I am totally following the liquid diet, getting all three Instant Breakfast drinks in along with about 45-50 oz. of water. She said that if I keep this up for at least three weeks, I can then start introducing some of the soft stage foods. I am so excited to finally get there. That day is Wednesday. I have missed eating so much. It has been the most difficult thing I've ever done. Yesterday we went to a Milwaukee Bucks game with a group of people on a bus. We had committed to going before my surgery

was scheduled. All week I had stressed over if I would be able to do this. When I got up I noticed my left side was really sore. I was really concerned. It actually went ok. I kept up on Tylenol and I packed a yogurt and two Instant Breakfast drinks. We even walked about six blocks to a mall and then around the mall for awhile. I did it and it felt great!

2/16/06 Weight - 297

Things are going great! I am now less than 300 pounds! I am also eating some soft foods now. It is great! I'm a little nervous about chewing my food well enough. I really try to concentrate on chewing but sometimes it seems like the food slips down on it's own. It is almost like learning to eat all over again. I am also learning to cook differently as well. Both are for a better, healthier me. It's difficult but will be worth it. When I'm hungry I just want to go to the fridge or cupboard and get something to eat. Right now I can't do that. In time I will learn how to deal with those urges and it will be easier. It's just going to take some patience.

2/27/06 Weight - 289

Today we taped the next segment for the Aspirus/Channel 7 Bariatric piece. I thought it went pretty well. I suggested we include something on the mental struggles of the surgery. Afterward I met with Kristi (physical therapist) for my appointment. She showed me some exercises to strengthen my stomach muscles. We did my measurements and I've lost 13 cm. It was pretty cool to see that. This weekend I tried on my old size 22 jeans and they fit! It was great day! Last weekend I realized all my size 24 clothes fit again. It has definitely been a motivational tool. One more month till I can start eating all foods again. I'm halfway there. I can do this!

3/4/06 Weight - 287

It was a long boring day today. It has been snowing and it depresses me. I'm so ready for spring. I just did my exercises that Kristi gave me. It makes me feel so good when I do them. She was right about them getting easier the more you do them. I have also been going to the Lifestyles gym for about 45 minutes 4 times a week. We got together with friends last night. We had dinner at El Mezcal and it went great. My husband and I shared the fajitas so I ate some of the shrimp and chicken with the refried beans. It was so great to be out again. We are making plans for Spring Break and that is exciting because by then I will be on the "full diet". It's been a slow week for losing pounds. I went back and forth with a pound a couple of days. I'm not real concerned with it because I've read plenty to know that this is totally normal. I can still see my clothes are continuing to get baggier. It seems slow day to day but when I look at the big picture, it's amazing.

3/14/06 Weight - 283

Things are going pretty well. It's funny because as I feel better and am able to eat more foods, it scares me a little. It brings back some of those bad thoughts that caused me to fail at weight loss in the past. Such as food cravings, eating when I'm not hungry, bingeing, etc. I just have to be so careful to not fall back into any of those behaviors. I

have worked too hard for this to fail. I want to be successful with this. I've lost 46 pounds and it feels great. People are starting to notice. I'm down two pant sizes. It's just the beginning and I can't wait to see what the future holds.

3/22/06 Weight - 280

My weight loss is going slower now than in the beginning. I went to the Aloha support group meeting last night and I asked a girl that is 18 months out about the weight loss slowing down. She said that whenever that would happen she would try to increase her protein and cut back on the carbs. So today I have started refocusing on the protein. I have also been pushing the water even more. I've been getting in 48-50 oz. But they want you to have 64 oz. I have lost 49 pounds and I have been doing well with my exercise program. I am determined to be successful with this.

4/1/06 Weight - 278

We had so much fun over Spring Break. We went to Chicago. It was awesome! We stayed downtown and enjoyed walking around. We stopped to shop at the American Girl Store. We stopped at the firehouse from the Great Fire. We walked down to Navy Pier and saw a movie at the Imax theater. It was great family time. I was able to do all that walking without a problem. That never would have happened a couple of months ago. I am so happy with the changes so far.

4/3/06 Weight - 277

I have started drinking protein shakes for breakfast. Margee told me to be careful on these shake mixes because some of them have high sugar or carbs. The one I found is recommended by Susan Maria Leach in her book "Before & After" which a friend gave me when I had the surgery. Susan had Gastric Bypass surgery and she has a lot of great recipes in her book. I've been really focused on getting 60 grams of protein. I've been losing about 2-3 pounds a week. On a day-to-day basis it seems slow but in the two months since my surgery I've lost 50 pounds. As of today it is 52 pounds.

4/19/06 Weight - 272

Things are going pretty well. It was really fun to see all our family at Easter. They hadn't seen me since before the surgery. They were really impressed with how much weight I've lost. Last night I went to the Aloha support group meeting. I love seeing the people I've met there. One lady couldn't believe how different I am looking. She said she could really see the weight loss in my face. It's hard not to compare your weight loss with some of the others. One lady has lost 73 pounds at this point. Kristi said everyone is different and that I'm doing great.

5/25/06 Weight - 257

I am so happy that I had the surgery! I feel so much better about myself. I see other people that are as heavy as I was at the start and they look so sad. I feel sorry for them because they don't know how much better their life could be. The gym I was going to changed their hours so I cannot longer go at 5 am. I checked out a couple of other gyms in the area but they just weren't the right fit. I have been going for a 30 minutes walk with my husband every morning. I really enjoy the time we have to talk. I have also been doing some of the exercises Kristi gave me, especially the arm ones. I'm having a big problem with extra skin hanging down. I have also been learning more with my eating. I have figured out that eating carbs slows down the weight loss. Of course I'm going to eat some but whenever possible I really try to limit them. It makes me feel so good to make these choices. I am four months out from surgery and I have lost 80 pounds. I'm feeling great! I'm excited about my future!

6/26/06 Weight - 250

It has been awhile since I've journaled. Since I'm feeling so great we have been so busy. My daughters are in softball a couple of nights a week and we have started camping for the season. It is amazing. I can't believe how different I feel. I can do so much more without feeling so tired. The bike rides are great. I have had to change the way I eat some of the meals we've always made camping. I eat my cheeseburger (made with ground round) without the bun. I pass on most of the desserts and I just try a bite of my husband's dessert. The family was making smores and I tried just a taste of my daughter's and it was just too sweet for me. I was concerned about the changes but the good far outweighed the bad.

7/11/06 Weight - 245

I had my annual physical today. I just had to share the great news. It had been five years since the last time I had my cholesterol checked so my doctor had told me to have it checked before this appointment. In January of 2000 it was 206. I had it tested on 7/7/06 and it is 156. Amazing! I was thrilled. The other big change was in my blood pressure. I had been having some borderline numbers the past two years. Numbers like 144/96, 142/86, 138/93, 130/90. Today it was 101/69. Again – amazing! It was the best physical appointment I've ever had (if that's possible). I would usually have to talk about trying to lose some weight. How we could improve my high blood pressure, etc. etc. This time we talked about how great I'm doing and how much healthier I am. It was great!!

7/19/06 Weight - 242

Summer continues to fly by. We have been so busy. We did the last taping for the Aspirus/Channel 7 Bariatric story today. They were all commenting on how different I look. I am excited to see the tapes showing my progress from the past six months. I can't believe it's been six months. I am feeling great! I have lost 93 pounds! I love going on family bike rides. My family is so proud of me. That makes me feel even better. We are going to Six Flags Great America in a couple of weeks and I can't wait. I haven't been able to go on the roller coasters in over 10 years. Ever since the time we went and I waited in line with my sister for about an hour only to get up to the ride and try to fit in the seat and be told they couldn't close the top so I would have to get out. Everyone watched while I climbed out and exited the ride. I wanted to die. It was the most embarrassing moment ever. Two years ago my family went and this was the first time my daughters had been there. They wanted me to go on rides with them and I was trying to explain to them why I couldn't. This year is going to be totally different. I'm riding everything!! Another exciting thing in my life is that I have decided to enroll at Northcentral Technical College. I had decided to not go on to college after high school despite a lot of disappointment from my teachers. I think I was just too afraid. I wanted to stay home in my small town where everyone knew me and nothing more was expected of me. I worked as a secretary for six years until I quit when I had my daughters. I went back to work when my girls started school and I currently work part time. Now that I feel so much better about myself, I just want so much more. I feel like I deserve so much more. I no longer have to settle for anything. If there is something out there that I want, I can go for it and get it. **The sky is the limit!**

5/13/07 Weight - 213

It has been awhile since I've journaled. First and foremost, my weight is at 213 lbs. That makes my weight loss 122 pounds. My "target" weight that was set with Dr. Weiland's office is 200 pounds. My personal goal in addition to that is to be less than 200 pounds. I've been fluctuating between 215 and 210 pounds. My husband and I have been trying to get our early morning walking routine going again but the weather has not been cooperating. If we don't walk in the morning, I try to get some other form of exercise in. My favorite is a family bike ride.

Last weekend we were at my daughter's school to let them play on the playground. I had the greatest time swinging. I haven't done that in years. I was always afraid I would break the chains not to mention my butt wouldn't have fit in the swing anyway.

I have been able to buy a whole new wardrobe for spring and summer. Picking out new clothes is still a learning experience for me. I still find myself choosing things that are too big. I have figured out that in the past all that mattered was if it fit. It was a successful shopping day if I found something that I liked and it actually fit! Now I'm learning that it is more about how it fits. I can actually use those mirrors in the fitting rooms instead of doing everything possible to avoid that reflection.

I have not found any food that I cannot eat. Certain foods like bread and pasta make me feel extra full or bloated so I will usually avoid these. Being able to eat anything again sounds like a good thing, but sometimes I think it is bad. I have learned all these new things about food and eating and I am so afraid of those old habits creeping back in. I have gone through so much and I feel so great about where I am that I cannot fail with this. I have to stay on top of it all the time. I know how to be successful and I have to keep these things center in my life.

We have started planning our next family vacation to California in October. I am so excited. Our last trip was to Florida about three years ago. Oh how different this will be!!

I have also completed my first year at NTC. It is hard balancing everything but it is so rewarding. I took three classes both semesters in addition to working part time. I have earned a 4.0 grade point average. I am so proud of myself!! Now I've challenged my daughters to keep up with their Mom. I feel like such a better role model for them. They know so much more about eating healthier and taking care of your body. What you put in your mouth is what your body will be made of. I don't want them ending up where I did. I want them to see how to make better choices now before it gets to that point. I can now teach them this without being a complete hypocrite.

I think that is all I have to say for now. I will try to be better about checking in more often. I will continue to fight those last 15 pounds!