

Ever watched your heart in action?



This morning was the final set of tests for my breathing issues; this time it was a 40 minute tour of my heart, using ECG and sonogram, mostly the latter.

It starts off with a test I'll always fail... blood pressure. Actually not terrible this time; 146/84. For me, in a doctor's office, this is not-so-bad. At home or work, it would be about 137/78 or so. But even though I'm more calm in a doctor's office than I used to be, I'm still not... calm. In fact, I find myself speaking in a very quiet voice, if speaking at all. Weird. Not my normal self. But on with the test.

For the most part you're on your side staring at the tech's glasses because you're propped up into a position you can't move from. But from one of the positions I was able to actually see what was on the screen, and what you see is... well... it looks like something you'd see in a popular mechanics article showing how an internal combustion engine works. You've got something that looks like a 2-stroke cylinder with two flapper valves. The valves are the really interesting parts. When you consider how important they are, as in, what happens if one develops a leak, or decides not to seal... and then you think about how many tens of thousands of times a day this valve is doing that.

Of course, there's no piston in your heart, just walls that close in at times to pump blood one way, then release to let more blood back in. Or something like that.

And then there's the sounds. You know there are clues in the sounds, but you don't know what you're listening for. Same thing, really, for the pictures. The tech is seeing things, taking pictures of the screen at irregular intervals, sometimes many in a very short period of time, sometimes a minute goes by without a picture. Is that good, or bad? There's nothing coming from the tech to indicate one way or the other. The good news, at least, is that at the end they didn't strap me to a gurney and tell me "You're not going anywhere today" or something like that.

At the end of it all I'm told the results were going to be seen by a cardiologist, who would then consult with my doctor, who would then go over it all with me, after which I feel like I'm getting somewhere, or get my affairs in order. Thankfully, the latter doesn't appear to be a possibility.