

THE WEEKEND TOURIST

An unexpected detour to Abbott



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My weekend plans included browsing the shelves at a quaint bookstore, shopping for local treasures on a delightful tree-lined street, and sampling pastries from one of the areas's premier pastry chefs. Sounds too good to be true? Well, you'd be reading about that dream weekend now if my plans hadn't been thrown for a loop and if I hadn't been thrown into the emergency room.

But don't worry, this will still be a Weekend Tourist column. I'm not going to miss opportunity for adventure just because I'm in the hospital. So hang in there.

One little tiny blister on my fingertip caused by a splattering of cooking oil provided enough of an entrance to my body for strep bacteria to creep in and infect me. I really didn't think it was a big deal until days later when I woke up with red hot-rod-like flames shooting up my arm.

When my friend The Percolator drove me to our local Urgent Care we realized Urgent Care is really just for Monday through Friday urgencies so we headed to Abbott Northwestern's Emergency Room. After spending the morning in ER getting antibiotics by IV, I learned I was going to be staying there a while and was moved upstairs to a hospital room. The vast window looked over soccer and baseball fields and clear to the Cathedral of Saint Paul. An upholstered window seat opened into a guest bed. Dark

PIE BREAK

I'm never happier than at Caribou Coffee, so I was thrilled one was in the building. Take your latte to the seventh floor's soaring atrium guest lounge complete with water fountain.

wood laminate flooring, light sage wall coverings, built-in shelving and cabinets of birch all made the place feel like a fine hotel up north. Perk said the room was nicer than an expensive hotel we had stayed at recently downtown. And if you're hungry — just order Room Service — even for your guests!

The first of my many cheerful nurses came in and drew an outline of the red streaks on my arm with a purple pen. Over the next few days we'd watch to see if they changed or dissipated. It looked like a map of the Mississippi with all its tributaries. Other than being in a state of shock that my weekend was ruined, I felt completely fine. The nurse said I was free to roam the buildings and only needed to be back in my room by 8 p.m. for my next round of antibiotics.

I called my friend Roz, who was supposed to go to more interesting places with me that day and asked her if she wanted to mill around Abbott. She's a true sport and said she'd be right over. We started at the

first floor information desk. I told the woman that I was staying there and wondered if they had a brochure of the art collection. Roz lifted up my left arm, shook my hospital bracelet at her, and said, "She's not 'staying here,' she's a patient." No brochures though but she did turn on the player grand piano in the lobby for us while we looked around.

Abbott Northwestern Hospital's roots go back to 1882 as a women and childrens hospital. It's grown over the years to become the largest hospital in the Twin Cities and also includes the Sister Kenny Institute. For the newest building on campus, built in 2005, and my home for the weekend, a Feng Shui specialist was consulted. Elements of earth and nature abound. Cascading water fountain walls greet visitors in the lobby and on the seventh floor, two-story guest lounge. There are open-air balconies for resting, and lounges at the end of the hall had floor-to-ceiling windows and a gas fireplace. Up and down every hallway was artwork showing leaves and flowers and scenes of nature. The collages, monoprints, paintings and photos brought nature within and we really appreciated it.

Here are four large art pieces commissioned specifically for the building:

• Minnesota's beloved sculptor from St. Peter, Paul Granlund, has a piece anchoring a winding pathed park in the center of Abbott's many

buildings. "Wellspring" is a cube of bronze, with figures ranging in age from infant to adult breaking out of the cube and coming to life.

• "Healing Spirit," a three-story-tall bronze sculpture on the building above the main entrance was created by Minneapolis artist Gorgette Sosin. It rises out of an abstract Hebrew letter "shin" which represents the presence of God.

• "Birdsong Glade" by Emily Wilson is a 22-foot flora and fauna artwork. Birds, loons, leaves and flowers are carved in basswood, finely sanded, painted in beautifully abstract patterns then attached to colorful steel supports. (main lobby, hangs on second floor, with close-up viewing sample on first floor)

• "Autumn Diamond" by Linda Leviton represents the colors and shapes of nature seen on a walk through the woods. Bright colors pop off the copper panels. (main lobby, second floor)

When we returned from our tour, The Percolator was back with my favorite blanket, fluffy pillow and our coffee pot, so we could settle in for the weekend. The streaks eventually faded, I thanked all the staff for the lovely time, I'll always remember the birch tree print in my room, but to tell the truth, I was more than happy to return home from this adventure.

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