



Lining Up My Ducks

by Patricia

(Patricia's stroke happened two years ago in the early evening. About an hour later, she tried to contact her son-in-law. After about another hour, she was admitted to the hospital's ER. Patricia's student therapist this quarter (Kerry) helped on some of the story mechanics, but Patricia wrote the majority of it independently at home. - ed.)

I finished dinner and was loading the dishwasher when I didn't feel right . . . and then I peeled over backwards and then all went black.

I found myself on my back wanting to stand up but I could not move in any direction. I lay there waiting to see what I could do now?



Patricia

I tried my legs and they slithered on the floor and then I took a big breath and hauled myself up, up and then down again. This time I groped for something on which to hang. The thing I gasped was covered with blood — my blood! All over the floor, the wall and me.

I tried to reach the wall phone but it was high enough not to reach it. Also the wall intercom call in call was unresponsive to my grumbling over the speaker. The phoned cord was hanging loose but I grasp it. Fine! What do with it? Phone my daughter but I did not remember her phone number? Then the phone rang. I tried answering it. It was my daughter's husband.

I did not make any sense at all. He did not have a key to get into my complex and no one answered his knock. So wait, wait. Now I came to my senses what can I do and where will I go? No where? OK, I will go slowly,

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To come: Stories about Aphasia from the family

slithering on the slippery bloody floor and when I reach the hall I will be at the door of the powder room. Then I can haul myself up onto the toilet to sit. Sit I did and I sit did and sit I did. Thinking about the mess that I am in. Well, I have to go moving around to see if something help me.

Getting down off my perch on to the floor again left me nothing else to do but yell, yell, no words of meaning. I cried out—nothing. I crawled on the floor until I reached the front door. The door was unlocked. I heard voices. And they came into view. An ambulance and Fire Dept and neighbors. They asked me what was wrong? I did not know and I was unable to vocalize anything. I collapsed onto the ground and I went into semiconsciousness as I was now taken care of.

When I awoke in the hospital I saw the family I wondered what had happened. Then my daughter said "Mom, you have had a stroke and you cut your arm on the kitchen fire extinguisher and they have sewn it up". No, no, no. I thought to myself — my mother and grandmother each had strokes and I had always favored my father's side. How is it happening to me?

(Note: Patricia's father's side had had a heart problem history and her mother's side

had a history of strokes. She had always assumed that she would have heart problems. —ed.)

I have to go back to Egypt, Africa and all the places I wish to visit. Now it is impossible for me.

I cannot do anything. Anything but watch the clock on the wall go to 1 to 12 and back again to 1. Just all I can do. A few days later they got me up in a chair. Then I realized that I have never been able to give up when things went wrong. So, get my strength back fast—no visitors, no television, no radio—rest and drawing with colored pencils. They got me into a wheel chair, then a walker, then assisted me walking (I hated the belt around me) and then finally I was on my own!!!!!! Walking was slow but I was going to do it!!!! Up at least, but my speech was lacking. How am I ever going to make people understand me? Before releasing me out of the hospital they signed me up to therapy—speech, physical and occupational. Then I got a “Onward and upward” lease on life. My therapy was just what the Dr. ordered. Occupational therapy was easy for me. Physical therapy because I still had problems with right hand and foot. Therapy speech and language I am working on continually. All the therapists with whom I have worked are great both in Northwest Hospital and in the Speech and Hearing Clinic at the University. So, back to school again!!!!!! My travels will wait until I get all my ducks in a row again.

(The card in Patricia’s hand describes things for her to think about when starting to speak, if she’s having difficulty. So this isn’t a cheat sheet, it’s a Help Card, prepared by Kerry, Patricia’s student therapist this quarter. —ed.)



My Survival – Part II

- by Deb

(Deb’s severe stroke was three and a half years ago. Her story started in issue #12, December 2004.

The first part focused on the occurrence of the stroke and the impressive medical assistance that kept her alive. She was interviewed by two other aphasia survivors and Ted has prepared this article.

Before her stroke, Deb was an active sailor. She returned to sailing—last year.

—ed.)



Deb: I used to have a big one (boat), my own. I used to have a big one, a yacht and the little one before my stroke, but now. I’m getting better. I’m gonna do that. I am! It’s a lot of work (maintaining a boat). Not

this.... summer, but next year. Not this summer; but next year my own boat. I’m gonna. It’s, really expensive, but you can find stuff.... sailing – cheap, but you fix it up. I’m gonna do it again....

I’m waiting for summer. Go to Leschi and Golding Gardens. There is a group. They sail and we go camp out for 2 nights and we have Indian stuff and go there and camp. It’s really nice.

Ted: On Blake Island?

Deb: Right, exactly. Sail separate group – a lot.

(Note: As an explanation, Deb as been associated with a sailing group and has been an active member. —ed.)

Deb: And also, I sail. And this is my group. Um, see all this (points to a picture –

ed.) um, this is the one, see the wheelchair and stuff. They're all, that they... (*are handicapped -ed.*)

Ted: *This group of people have difficulties? So this whole group is supported by people that are willing to get you out on the water.*

Deb: Exactly. Now, I was, before I was stroke, I was sailing. And then I surgery and I didn't but now I am going to again. So I'm going to do this. Everything. And this one, (*Blake Island -ed.* I'm going to do it! Don't you think that's going to be fun?

Ted: *Oh I've been there before. And the food that they have for the trip is fantastic.*

Deb: Um, I want to go, I've never done this to there. I've done one....for the...I'll show ya. (*References communication notebook and points to Guam -ed.*) I was there for two years.

Ted: *You were talking about starting sailing. Soon?*

D: Yes. Can you see this? (*points to brochure -ed.*) Um, twice a month, sail with, in sail. And, um, we can do that and then also we have a parties and all kinds of stuff. It's really neat, because I used to do this and now I'm going to do this again, and that's going to be the one, the first for me that I can sail and get out a little bit. Do you know what I mean?

Ted: *I know how wonderful it is. What kind of boat is it?*

Deb They have four. Sailing boats. So

Ted: *Owned by this club?*

Deb: Yes, can you believe that? It started and then grew and grew and grew. And it's really, I think it's wonderful that they can do this. Especially they can do that and like I think this one...the guy...Bob Ewing, he's the head. And um, he has a wheel chair and he does it anyway. I think that's just wonderful, you know? And some of them, they can do everything, and some of them a little bit, and it's ok. And I think that's wonderful. And a lot of people...oh and also... And you guys can go to any of

these too! That's why I wanted to show you. I like sailing, I just love it. Outdoors, I love it. I love the water, you know. So that's nice to know two years, I couldn't do it, now I can a little bit.

(*Note: During 2004, Deb and her group sailed to Blake Island with the Footloose Sailing Association and plan again in 2005.*

This article, prepared by Ted from her interviews, continues Deb's story about active, continuing recovery.

She is able to achieve things that had become impossible for her.



Ted

More of her story will appear in a later newsletter. She will comment on ongoing activities such as her family and cooking, major events such as moving into her apartment, working on the computer, and future plans for travel and adventure. -ed.)

Notice

Deb's sailing has been with the Footloose Sailing Association. We feel that this notice shows that there are many opportunities available for people with disabilities.

Search for them!

***"Leave Your Disability
at the Dock"***



Footloose Sailing is not just a sailing program, it is an opportunity!

Call Bob Ewing at
(206)382-2680 ««

National Aphasia Awareness Month

June

Theme:
"Aphasia: Getting the Word Out"



APHASIA TIPS

- Aphasia is a loss of words - not intelligence.
- Provide choices.
- Help communicate if asked.
- Acknowledge the frustration.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- If you don't understand, say so.
- Ask simple questions and allow extra time.

- Teach others about aphasia.
- Indicate with gestures.
- Promote community awareness.
- Support all attempts to communicate.

Contact:

National Aphasia Association

800-922-4622

www.aphasia.org

University of Washington Speech and Hearing Clinic

4131—15th Ave, NE
Seattle, WA 98105
Phone: (206) 543-5440
Fax: (206) 616-1185

<http://depts.washington.edu/sphsc/clinic.html>

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- to access past issues of the Writer's Guild quarterly newsletter:

"In Search Of. . ." .



Publisher's Note —

One of my favorite moments as I cross the 520 Bridge each day on my way to the U.W., is to look for the turtles! They have been hunkered down in the mud now for the winter and have recently emerged for us to catch a glimpse—as we zoom by in our hurried lives. When I spot them, I'm inspired to think of their desire to make it to the top of that floating log or rock. How do they do it? It must be a tenacious spirit—to muster their resources, keep on trying, and forge ahead in spite of the obstacles ahead.

Hmmm... that spirit must be in many stroke survivors I know. People who face incredible challenges to get back on their feet and get back in "the game of life." Now that's inspiring!

Thank you to everyone for a great issue and for getting back in the game of life! You are an inspiration!
- Nancy Alarcon



**WE— aren't the slow ones—
WE— push—
WE— strive to survive—
WE— ADVOCATE —
— OURSELVES.**

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