Book Review

My Stroke of Insight

by Ted

Every stroke survivor has a story. The subject of this book describes one extraordinary experience. Events are traced from the chaos of a stroke to a complete recovery.

Jill Taylor is a neuroanatomist. She has taught at a medical school and has conducted research related to mental disease. She has received professional recognition for her accomplishments.

At the time of her stroke she was doing research at the Harvard brain bank. As a brain scientist she was fully aware of the structure and functions of a human brain. When she had a stroke she exactly knew what was happening. Initially, she adopted a clinical observation state of events. She thought, “I’m having a stroke, this is cool!”

The stroke was not cool. Ms Taylor had a hemorrhagic stroke. A blood vessel ruptured, spilling blood into her skull. As blood flooded the left side of her brain, she lost the associated functions (speak, read, etc.). Her right side enjoyed a holiday as she drifted into a never-never land. Her condition can be life threatening.

As an author, she presents a clear text with simple explanations of a complex topic. She outlines the basic features of the human brain. Similarly, she describes the surgery that was needed. The book also serves as an introduction to human anatomy and physiology. Relevant details are included in the book. I highly recommend the book.

At this point, I want to change the focus of this review. Beyond the biology lesson and... (Continued on page 3)

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Our Group’s Puzzle

by ??

The author has decided to mystify everybody. The article provides clues to identify our group members. Can you identify them? Can anybody?

-ed.>>

The air is filled with laughter as goodies are passed around; it is time for the stroke of luck that keeps us together to begin our weekly gay soiree – a gathering of intelligent-sia!

- A plus with a pastor in our midst the group discourses dealt with topics of good taste and the adherence of morality in dealing with the discussion of subjects that sometimes tend to be argumentative. His tactics of humor brings things smoothly even.

- Occasionally there is a voice not heard from often enough but one that is filled with information from her very interesting well-traveled experiences. It is such a delight to have her contribution so amusingly told.

- Next to the traveler sits a person with a cup full of graciousness and giving that is her recipe for life. She follows this out with concocting recipes of gastronomy to serve with pleasure to our recipient group. Her cakes are awesome.

- Much enjoying the goodies here sits a fatherly figure whose bouncy humor lightens everyone, must be his Scots heritage or... (Continued on page 4)
My Life Changed

You have had a stroke.
How has your life changed?

It was in the Depression. In 1932, my Dad took his Model T Ford, my mom, my older brother and I and left South Dakota. It took about 4 weeks to come across to friends in NE Oregon. He worked for a dairy farmer and I started in 1st grade school. I went to 11 different schools—we moved a lot.

Dad always negotiated with a land-lord to live in a house and do improvements. It was a way to get through. We always had chores—splitting kindling for mom’s stove and as you got older, you had to help Dad knock down a tree, then we had to split the wood. My job was the chickens: to feed, clean poop out, etc. I liked that job.

When I was in the 7th grade, Dad got a letter from a man in Oregon to come out and sharecrop his 100 acres of land. There was always a dozen cows, a dozen horses, chickens, and a pig.

Dad in fall butchered an old cow and the pig. Everything went into sausage and the smokehouse. Always a family project, and, Oh, that was good!

Dad had a big Italian prune tree area, 5 acres in cherry trees, 5 in asparagus. The rest was in cow pasture and mom’s garden. My job was on the hill with 1-2 horses. Dad plowed, I harrowed and weeded the hill.

I took care of the horses. I’d give them an egg and they would spit the shells out; their coats kept shiny. I always talked to them, and they never bothered me.

When did you start working off the farm?

In my junior year. We moved again. I heard my brother was going off to war, so my Dad said—“The boys are going off and I can’t do it all myself”, so they sold it.

I was 15 and walked into the local Safeway. The store manager said, “You want a job, son? Can you lift 100 lbs. of sugar?”

“I have lifted 110 lb. sacks of wheat onto our truck. I can do it!”

“How old are you?”

“15.”

“Oh. I can’t hire you. Why can’t you say you’re 16?”

“My Dad would skin me alive.”

He had Dewey go outside and put some coins on his desk, called him in and asked him to count the coins. Dewey said “16” and the man said, “Oh, 16? You’re hired!” (I still remember that!)

I joined the FFA and had chickens; my project was to build a chicken house that could hold 100-200 chickens for 2 years. I would cull them out and sell them as fryers, getting about $1 apiece. It keeps you going!

Summer months in my senior year, we usually worked about 20 hours a week. Another kid and I, close friends, went to a pea canner and checked it out. Nearly 16 years old and we can drive a truck! That was during the war so you couldn’t buy trucks; these were Internationals with no cabs. You haul peas off the field, following the ridge line on a steep slope. As the truck gets top-heavy, a Caterpillar tractor follows alongside as a deadman, to keep the truck from rolling. Even so, once, my friend’s truck capsized and rolled all the way to the bottom. He was safe, but the truck was demolished.

Walla Walla brand-fresh peas—they were wonderful.

That gave you a whole lot about life and living; how did that kind of feeling hit you when you when you had a stroke?

I had no idea what was happening. My wife and I were eating dinner. The phone rang and she called me to the phone.

All I remember is that I got up. Then I was on the floor, and she said “Hang up quick, I’ve got to make a call.”

More on Dewey’s story in the next issue. –ed. >>
the skill of medical personnel, I wanted to know “How did she survive and make a complete recovery?” I think there were two critical factors. First and foremost, she showed an outstanding example of the human spirit. Secondly, she was assisted with positive friends and family, particularly her mother who became her primary caretaker.

Throughout her ordeal she showed a strong spirit. At the first moments when she realized that she was having a stroke she sought for help. It would have been easy to surrender to the never-never land that enveloped her as the functions of the left side of her brain systematically went silent. Instead, she attempted contact for help. She tried again, and again, and again, until she succeeded and help came.

Ms. Taylor faced a situation that is common to many other stroke survivors. She lived alone. Her means of communication was shattered. She had to fight through a fog of chaos with diminished abilities. It took a strong spirit to overcome assorted difficulties.

Another example of her strong spirit can be found in her approach to recovery. Very early in the process, she announced to herself and anyone in range, “I will make a complete recovery.” It took eight years and an enormous effort but she did! Her positive attitude was key to her successful recovery.

A final example of her spirit can be found in her rehabilitation. She quickly realized that, “I am in charge of my own rehabilitation.” I need professional help but I will be an active participant in the process. She sought opportunities to seize the initiative. Her emphasis was on helping her own rehabilitation.

My comments about Dr. Taylor’s book will continue and will be provided in future newsletters.

(Continued from page 1)

Again, our group was offered a chance to meet with a class exploring Human Communication and Its Disorders (SPHSC 250).

From the class perspective, the meeting is a chance to see a “real-world” example of the text descriptions of communications disorders. From our group perspective, it is a “real-world” chance to share with the students our experiences and heighten their understanding—an understanding that they themselves shall face such communications disorders.

Each member spoke of the disorders they have met and are resolving, and thoughtful observations were made in the class:

“She's not very fluent. She still is coherent and makes sense, basically.”

“...much like text messaging—very segmented—not as fluid and cohesive.”

“There's nonspecific references such as 'I would go there and I do that.' Filling in with specifics may make sense—but be incorrect.”

“...nice periods of fluency...”

“...have to work harder to make the connections.”

“...you said it differently...”

(Continued on page 4)
maybe the Scotch inside of him, but no way to find out! A kilt wearing man, he is all man!

- Then is the soft-spoken one with fine remarks that wants to be heard by everyone but some miss hearing his worthy words due to hearing loss of some of his listeners. A very courteous, gentle, gentleman, he.

- With a large inventory of news items right from his mental store where facts and experiences are put out in an interesting story about his life in the food business. He always brings cookies with him!

- Then we hear an intelligibly excellent summation of the topics of discussion of the day. These are given in a profound professional way by the professionally, professorial, professor in our group. His East Coast education has done him well.

- Speaking of education the person who has been with the group longest is a lovable teacher. He was stricken while in the classroom. He fends ably by himself. He goes anywhere and does anything he wishes regardless of limitations. A smile always lightens his face.

- How many physical setbacks can one take and still be as gregarious as this ex-teacher? Her enthusiasm when speaking is sometimes so overwhelming to her that she self directs a “whoa” or “fini.” Thus she holds her audience well.

- What will the newest individual in our group be able to offer with his salesmanship and his photography? It looks like he will fit in very well as he is agreeable, chimes in on the topics and laughs on queue.

- An early youthful energy empowered this activated youth to try swimming as means to seek a scholarship to college which he did, enrolled in Stanford University. From there his life was off and running all the way to his Canadian island. Go Bears!!!

- Well, for one member, our guess is that he is somewhere in the Oregon Wilderness.

- Someone wrote this with a tongue in cheek and the author means no harm or insult. All in fun!

Aimee: “This is a great field. It’s a pleasure. It puts a face to the disorders that we learned about. The group is called a stroke survivor group. It's a pleasure and honor to work with this population. It's very exciting.”

Greta: “I would say that I would work with kids. But when you’re observing and you continue on, do a balance between kids and adults, no matter what population you might face. This group of adults, especially stroke survivors, are interesting and have a lot to offer.

You have to keep balanced to get a good experience.”

Well, this was not a costly experiment, and it appears to have been mutually satisfying. We can look for more togetherness. >>