Interview with Paul

*By Bob (B)*
and with Nancy (N) taking notes
and providing some written support

Bob - What happened to you when you had your stroke?
Paul - Sometimes I don’t understand the words or the sounds - sometimes doesn’t connect.
B - When Joan [Paul’s wife] speaks to you is she always close or in another room.
P - No, she moves normally. Not a problem; other than a different place - she would be wherever she needs to be.

B - That makes sense; but it didn’t answer my question.

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Aphasia Day Retreat #4
Saturday, March 8th
9AM - 2PM
Northshore Senior Center
10201 E Riverside Drive
Bothell, WA

Great spaces and free parking! Registration opens on January 7th.
This will include opportunities to purchase lunch and to support some of the Retreat activities and events.
This day is a full day of speakers and activities with special focus on being an informed consumer in today’s aphasia rehabilitation (therapies and treatments).

Last year’s keynote presentations by professionals covered “Staying Healthy Post Stroke” and “Brain Plasticity”. This March Retreat #4 also includes a morning of presentations on current issues, meaningful to us as both survivors and as caregivers.

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Nancy - What does Joan do to help you understand?
P - She does a very good job to help ourselves; particularly me. She works really hard to get me better at these things. I have to tell her that I talk and I talk and I might not be getting better - so we'll have to quit - cause I'm not able to do it.
B - Good. Like two very loving people, it doesn't always work.
P - I don't think so; just like the example we just talked about. Whenever we talk - let's see, I don't want... I don't feel like there was a problem for her because of - that you were trying to say, or your friend -
B - You're doing great.
P - You had your problems; Joan and I are just trying to speak; it's not a matter to say - oh boy -
B - Sometimes if I'm not going to do it correctly for Joan, then we'll just try again and again til I can do something that will help. And if we don't do it, then eventually we'll say - the time isn't right - we'll have to do it another time. There's not kind of problems at all - it's just that if we can't do it - we can't do it at that time.
B - I believe what you're saying. My racket in the service was communications. It involves somebody and somebody else trying to communicate. And there, difficulty lies with both people and the communications path. One could be out in the hall.
P - I'm not following.
B - Did you feel that when you were in the hospital there was something wrong?
P - I don't think so, not at that time. I could be wrong - Joan might have a different opinion. I don't feel, I knew. It seemed like the questions were just - I'm just answering all the time but it doesn't have any meaning for all the people. I'm just doing something I should be doing. Again I'm talking the first number of days or longer than that.

B - An avalanche of questions. When did you have your stroke?
P - Date... (trying to recall the date)
B - When that happened; how did it feel?
P - First of all I didn't understand it happened, I went to the hospital; for a number of days, I didn't know what happened, I don't know how long it was for somebody - Joan - to know and "you have this issue and we have to start all over again. I don't know when. Maybe 7 times of more. I don't know when it was I give you that answer.
B - how did you feel? What did you think happened to you? What can you recall about?
P - I don't know, I'm trying to think, I can try here...... I don't really have an answer again. I can talk - at the hospital - giving me a problem and these other people. I wanted to do this, somebody would say yes or no. Then another question, it wasn't making any sense to me or anybody else for awhile.
B - Did you feel that when you were in the hospital there was something wrong?
P - I don't think so, not at that time. I could be wrong - Joan might have a different opinion. I don't feel, I knew. It seemed like the questions were just - I'm just answering all the time but it doesn't have any meaning for all the people. I'm just doing something I should be doing. Again I'm talking the first number of days or longer than that.
B- As best you remember at that time at the hospital - when somebody asked you a question, you answered it.
P - I think that is true. You know that doesn’t mean I was answering it.
B - Yes and that is part of the story

P - OK! we’ve got one!
B - So from that point from these things, from now can you look back on that and say, I think I understand what was happening?
P - What’s happening in my brain?
B - Yes, and understand now better what was happening. So that is a very important part of the story, as we get beyond, as we communicate better, we remember more about what happened to us, that helps us understand
N - Does that make sense?
P - Say it again. I think I shut down.
B - That is part of the story
P - I know that happens.
B - Yes, our brain shuts down.
P - I’m done.
B - That is part of the understanding.
P - So the question is: …… what were we talking about?? (Both laughing)
B - Neither of us understand!!

B - Neither of us understand!!

N - (Explained what the topic was.)
P - The answer is yes; I don’t know if I’m seeing it clearly now, but it is clearer than it was.
N - Right before the stroke, do you remember what you were doing? If you think back, can you remember?
P - I don’t really remember. Joan was trying to talk; she was talking. I was saying “junk” really. I was saying all sorts of things. For some reason, I’m not the only 1 - I wasn’t able, but I could really swear -
N - Swear??
P - Yes, it was really bad - I was helping - anyway. I don’t really know the answer, if I’m making the problem, trying to talk with other people.
N - At the hospital - you were angry, combative, confused?
P - Yes! It might have been with Joan, too. Or any people I was talking to.
B - What I get out of this - you are married to an angel. I couldn’t follow that until Nancy explained. To me, as strokes go, that’s part of the story that the stroke and what happens to one can cause immense frustration, to make you feel that something doesn’t happen right. I think that is just part of what can happen when part of the brain goes off into Left Field somewhere.
P - I’ll have to call Joan - I’m hoping that my brain - I want to check with Joan ….
B - By all means, but the important part to get out of this is, “How you interpret yourself.” How Joan interprets you - that’s another viewpoint.
P - it’s going to be through Joan anyway. What-

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ever’s happening at that time, she going to have to tell me, “Paul - this is what’s happening.” I’m not sure that what my brain is saying happened is really what happened; we’d have to ask Joan.

B - Our brains put things in our mouths that aren’t true.

P - OK.

Closing note from Bob: Part of the story is looking back - what we were before. And looking at what happened and where we’ve come. What we’ll work on now will be different than what we worked on then.

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“People who say it cannot be done should not interrupt those who are doing it.”

George Bernard Shaw

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The afternoon will have separate breakout sessions especially oriented to the individual’s needs. The conclusion will follow up with a summary, a view to the future, and time to comment on the day’s events and to suggest improvements (strongly recommended - it will help us all).

Breaks during the day and during the lunchtime allow viewing a wide range of exhibits related to community services and resources for questions and handouts.

As Retreats have gotten larger, it became more and more difficult to find affordable places that were sized to be comfortable and effective. We believe this current location in Bothell to be satisfactory and appreciated.

This year, over a hundred survivors and family/caregivers and more than fifty UW Speech and Hearing volunteer students faculty are anticipated.  

(Contact the Clinic to Register starting 1/7/14)