**Book Review**

*My Stroke of Insight*, by Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor

Ted covered Jill’s stroke and brain surgery in the Winter and Spring issues. This article finishes with Jill’s recovery and the similar need for the complete support necessary to recover from a major stroke. —ed.

Dr. Jill Taylor’s immediate concern was to rest. At that time her mother moved in and came to the rescue. She quickly became the primary caretaker and put herself in charge of affairs, a role she was exceptionally well qualified. She was a retired schoolteacher. Furthermore, she once taught her daughter basic life skills when she was young. Perhaps the most significant factor in her rehabilitation was the presence of her mother—was always on hand. She adopted a simple but effective approach. First, demonstrate the skill. Then Jill would perform the skill. Repeat as needed. By bit to bit, she taught Jill how to use a bathroom, how to attend to personal grooming, and eventually, how to drive a car. In each case it was a step-by-step process.

Jill had to relearn from the beginning and her mother had to reteach everything. Her style of teaching reflects in her expertise and experience. She presented only small bits of information, one at a time. She used a slow and easy pace, frequent repetition, constant encouragement and always a positive approach. When needed, used only gentle correction and celebrated even very small accomplishments.

Overall, she constantly pushed Jill ahead to overcome the next challenge. At the beginning she used children’s books and related materials. On a daily basis, she used a multi-

---

**Inside this Issue:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inside this Issue</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book Review</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On “The Power of Our Stories”</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Our Group Can Achieve</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Life Changed (part 2)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Staff—and—The Clinic</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Power of Our Stories**

I am struck by the power of a person’s story; a bit of their history; some part of their life that they are willing to share. How often have we stopped to ask someone we know, “tell me about yourself?” We certainly ask many times each day, “how are you?” However, we may only skim the surface in getting to “now” someone. This is especially meaningful as I reflect on the power of each of the personal stories in our newsletter. It has also been an awakening for me as I have the opportunity to spend more time these days with my parents. When I’ve asked my folks to tell me a bit about their “growing up,” I’ve learned so much about how they’ve become the parents I love and admire today. Their stories have allowed us to connect as adults in a much deeper way.

In nearly every issue, stroke survivors, caregivers and family open up a part of their lives and share their story in their own words. What a privilege it is to be able to learn more about what has happened to those impacted by stroke. However beyond that, their stories have allowed us to know more about the person—not just the stroke survivor. The stroke is but a part of one’s life. Unfortunately, it can mask the real individual—the person right in front of you or me. My hope is that we’ll find more time in our lives to listen to the stories of those who are important in our lives, before the stories are lost or forgotten. 

<<
After six months of concentrated effort Mr. Edsel was able to recertify his pilot license.

The Edsel sisters became primary caretakers. Their mother was overwhelmed by the situation. During their tenure as rehabilitation advocates at least one of the sisters was always present. They kept in contact through Email. They moved into their parent’s house where they were very familiar surroundings.

Jill’s mother and the Edsel sisters share common attributes and their approach to recovery. In each case the person in charge of rehabilitation was always present. In each case the survivor was in familiar circumstances. The caretakers adopted a common style for rehabilitation. After their stroke, both a Harvard researcher and a seventy-year pilot were back in kindergarten. Caretakers had to teach everything from the start. A step by step was essential. For example, the Edsel sisters avoided situations where their father could have been in an airplane. For the time, they focused on basic skills; reading, writing and simple math. After some months an experienced pilot volunteered to supervise Mr. Edsel’s attempt to handle an airplane. The sisters had a “reality check” and continued their program.

These caretakers had a positive approach. They used constant encouragement and always pushing ahead to the next challenge. They also adopted much of the same material. For example, both used children’s book and games. As a retired teacher it was obvious for Jill’s mother to use children’s equipment. The Edsel sisters quickly found that childhood material appropriate. The sisters also conducted an extensive computer search adopting or discarding items as they went. Most impressively, they taught their father to handle numbers, a major challenge to overcome aphasia and a prerequisite for a pilot.

Dr. Jill Taylor survived a serious stroke and made an amazing recovery. There were two prominent factors in her recovery. First, Jill had the spirit to overcome adversity. Second, she benefited from a very capable caretaker to guide her efforts.
Our Group

This group, as with many other support groups, is to inform, assist, encourage, and comfort those who suffer from speech and language disabilities. In our group, this is mostly due to strokes (“brain attacks”, not “heart attacks”). Strokes don’t just affect speech and language. Depending on the size, duration, and location of the “attack” upon the brain, there may be (very often are) other problems that affect us and are, sometimes, obvious.

Our group meets weekly during University school quarters. Group can be challenging, but always interesting, enjoyable, and contribute to our recovery. Major purposes with us are: to rebuild lost connections and relationships; to build confidence in ourselves and our place in the group; and, to redevelop our conversational abilities.

As an example, a recent group meeting placed a request on our members to be active physically and mentally to think, act, speak and involve other’s comments.

This particular meeting started with some drama: the Yukon poem by Robert Service, “The Cremation of Sam McGee”. Lead by Bob, we all took part in the story, by howling, dancing, or moaning, as appropriate.

Then we looked at dramatic pictures—taken by an amateur—of the Hubble telescope and the Atlantis shuttle some 360 miles away from the photographer.

After comments, each member was asked to share something “outside”:

“If wishes were doable, what is the place you would most like to go to?”

Stephen: South Africa. Anywhere in S. Africa. I have friends there. I helped some there—and some of them helped me, too.

Lowell: There is a really special one, up north of Vancouver, Canada, but it’s on the world; I saw pictures of this area taken from the Shuttle.

Patricia: I want to be on the Hubble telescope.

Bev: Here! Here, right here! I just want to be here!
buzz, you could inhale and fly home.

**Stephen:** You got your Masters there?

**Ted:** Yep.

**Stephen:** How many people when you were there?

**Ted:** The biggest enrollment in the country. Money, money, money.

**Nancy:** South. To warm seas, blue skies, brilliant stars, and cool breezes. “And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying, and the flung spray and the blown spume, and seagulls crying.” *(John Masefield)*

**Bob A:** Egypt. Abu Simbel. The pharaohs built one of their temples down by the Nile. It was designed and built very carefully. There’s a long hall to its sanctuary and for only TWO days in the year does the sun reach all the way to sculptures on the back wall.

**The next point is “In:” What person comes to mind: good or bad? Would we like to see and talk with that person?**

**Ted:** My High School girlfriend. We were about 15 or 16. About 2 years ago she contacted me, and about a year ago, we met in Buffalo. We had a good time together; after I joined the Marine Corps, we went different ways. She wanted to get married NOW, I went to college. She got married a bunch of times; 5 kids, I think. She emails, I can’t; but we try to stay in touch.

**Bob H:** Abe Lincoln and Hitler are the Good and the Bad, in my mind.

**Dewey:** I keep thinking about presidents. I admire Harry Truman; probably Bush as the worst.

**Arlie:** I have no idea. The first one – the devil as the Bad, Evil. I have no immediate idea for the Good.

**Dennis:** In High School, the greatest teacher for me was Matt. He was my math teacher and coach in wrestling. and he got me to go ahead to Springfield College.

**Valerie:** For the Good, Jacque Cousteau – he changed our thinking about the oceans as dumping grounds forever. Then, there’s Bush having taken our country down; I’m not sure we’ll ever recover.

**Bev:** I wish I knew more about the Dalai Lama, and I would like to speak with him. For the other side, Bush or Cheney. Hard for me to decide that one.

**Patricia:** Lots of things; I have so many I like or admire. Krishna; my father; my teacher in the 5th and 6th. She was my same teacher for those 2 years; she had so much to give me. I just kept getting more and more of the same wonderful things. Edna May Doherty. I kept in touch until she was not available any more. We kept in touch for a long time. In Oakland, CA. She traveled all over; she was a spinster. She traveled every summer, and she had so much to give us. Just a wonderful woman!

**Lowell:** There is a whole bunch of people that really affected me, but I think first about Miss Ryan – she was teaching in Sacramento Jr. High. I could have gone this way or that—my grades were about C’s. But I think that because of her, I ended up going to Stanford and got A’s. Something happened. We kids would sit and have time with her. She was fantastic. She was a fantastic woman, and she traveled all the time and shared it with us. The negative, I guess: I was reading recently about Islam and Muslims, it’s scary stuff. In the name of Mohammed, killing lots of people.

**Stephen:** Interesting to me that some of the people mentioned are dead or historical. A person you’ve never met is Chi Chu Choi. He is an acupuncturist. He is a best friend. He doesn’t worry about money; he has 6 kids. He got tired of everything, so he went to Seattle. He didn’t have a job. I had a friend who was working for the TV. I said—I’ll help come to the TV for 3 days; after that for the next 5 years, he did acupuncture for the TV people for the next 5 years. We ended up being friends—having coffee. When I had my stroke, he was exactly the same person. He would still show up and come by. Relationships are really important to me.

**Bob A:** Hearing the ideas people came up with kept affecting and modifying my choices and I thought it was difficult enough before. My dad died when I was 10 days old and mom was deeply affected for a long time. So, it turned out that my 1st school teacher (Miss Poppleton) was like a mother to me.  

<<
My Life Changed (Part 2)

by Dewey

The first part of this article by Dewey was to set the stage for the impact from his stroke. How must we deal with the complex and connected effects of our strokes? It helps to hear what has happened to others. It helps us even more to understand how others have been met with a tragedy— and succeeded.

My wife and I were just eating. I took a bite and the telephone rang. She answered the phone and told me “The phone is for you.” I got up and fell down on the floor. That’s all I remember.

My wife said “spit up your food” and I heard her say “Hang up quick, I gotta call.” Shortly after, a whole bunch of firemen were there and this big, big guy had me by the feet and another big one carried me out to the ambulance. I heard the guy behind me say “Can’t this thing go any faster?” And the driver said “We’re doing 85 and we’re going flat out with the siren going.”

When I woke up in the hospital, it was getting late and I says, “What is going on here?” Here I was in what I found out later was the emergency room and tubes hanging up there and coming down into me, with a doctor or attendant. Whoever he was says, “Well, we have to keep you here tonight, don’t worry. And your wife can go home.” OK, fine. I don’t remember anything else until the second day.

They wouldn’t tell me until several days later, it was something about having a stroke and “trust us, we’re going to help you.”

Could you feel that you could trust them?

Yes, they were very helpful, very kind. You could sense it.

Many years back, when we moved in schools, you could see that in a teacher’s eyes.

The second day, I was walking a little bit in the room and into the hallway and a lady said we’re gonna take you to rehab hospital and you have to sign the ticket.

She handed me a ballpoint pen and I looked at it and I says “What’s that thing?” They said it’s a pen and you have to sign your name. and I thought for quite a while and I says “I don’t know my name, you gotta tell me.” So, I made my X, but the girl signed it and took me to the main hospital.

I found out later that was named for John J. Rhodes who was a retired very older gentleman (Arizona congressman), little guy, I met him several times, a very nice man, very rich, his wife died from having a stroke and so he built the wing to the side of the hospital, which is strictly for stroke patients, and survivors or whatever you want to call them. I was there roughly two weeks, maybe, give or take.

They had two people per room. This fellow that was in my room— oh, he was in tough shape and I said boy, oh boy, that’s not gonna be me, ’cuz he was in really bad shape. In the time I was there the staff, I guess you could call them, I think there was one guy who came to help and the rest of them were all girls like these girls that come in here (at the clinic.) They looked probably in their 20’s or 30’s, maybe a little more I don’t know, but they were very good.

I’ll never forget the lady that would come into our room at 6 o’clock in the morning. She’s a big, heavy set lady and, boy, she’s a Top Sergeant. We called her Sarge, and boy, she’d say, “All right, you guys, get your butt in gear, and get your shower, get dressed and go do something.” She always give you a hug, too.

We did the same thing over and over and over, but every hour was different and every day was different, but you’re still doing the same things some time or another up until 9 o’clock at night. One of the things to do was you had boards and you put round pegs and square pegs into the holes and you had a picture up there and you had to make your picture look like that picture.
And a big, huge gym where you had to bounce a ball, with both hands, big balls, bigger balls, and catch balls. And outside there was a big field that had holes in it and you had to walk from here to there and they had a belt around you and the girl always had your arm or hand to see if you saw that hole and went around it or if you tried to get through it but I always went around.

At one place they tried to cross a street and they waited a little while and there was a car coming and the girl started to walk out. Boy I automatically, like I do with a kid, put my hand in front to stop her from going out there and she says “Oh, you did good.” That was very, very interesting.

I had to come there 3 times a week, very similar like Nancy was doing here. Then I had to start writing again and I here, the other day, found a notebook of my writing. Man, it looked like a kindergartener’s writing.

We were told to come to Nancy, so we made an appointment. When we got here in one of the little rooms, there was Nancy and 2-3 girls.

You got to pick one?

No – it didn’t matter; they were all pretty. One of the impressions with Nancy—when I first came here & the little girls—Dana; I had the same feeling there. She was very, very understanding and helpful.

I was told: M, W, F – Nancy finally told me at the start, “We don’t bill insurance.”

“We’re not broke but we can do it”

Nancy said it’s going to be expensive - $35/week!! I thought that was not expensive.

Nancy said “You’re helping us!” I didn’t realize someone was behind the mirrors, but learned the process.

The girl there had me read a book, close it, and put it away. And Wednesday, first thing she did was to have me remember what I read Monday without opening the book and then we went over what I did do, what I did forget about and all that.

She also had me write!

My Dad was born in Romania, with small schooling. One thing he did have was beautiful penmanship. He insisted on that with swats. I couldn’t do that. But little by little, I’m doing that.

How do you think you’ve come? What’s your goal? What is your goal to get back to?

I wish the clock would turn back 20 years. After the stroke, you were able to hold a conversation?

Absolutely no way! My speech was slurred, my mind was in every direction.

I had to look right at the face of the person to absorb it in. It’s weird; something was haywire; it’s still not back today.

My wife would try to read an article to me at breakfast. I had to have her stop so I could read and absorb it. Unless I have 100% absolute concentration, it doesn’t work.

I read a lot by scanning; if I really want to know it, I have to read it slow and talk about it and re-read it.

A Reader’s Digest book takes me three months. I fall asleep and have to start over. I don’t read as much. But I do have some favorite TV shows, like Westerns.

With Westerns you don’t have to worry about something complicated; it’s the same guy, on the same horse.  

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

Visit our web site to:
- learn more about our services; and,
- to access past issues of the Writer’s Guild quarterly newsletter:

“In Search Of …”  

Newsletter Staff:
Publisher & Chief Editor:
Nancy Alarcon, M.S., CCC-SLP
Clinic Director

Writer’s Guild Editors (with aphasia):
Bob Anderson
Ted Paluchowski