

BRAIN INJURY

WINTER 2022

HOPE

MAGAZINE

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Welcome

Publisher's Introduction

HOPE MAGAZINE

*Serving the Brain
Injury Community*

Winter 2022

Publisher
David A. Grant

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David A. Grant
Karl Heller
Justine Johnston Hemmestad
Cyndi Kamps
Ric Johnson
Rosalie Johnson
Isaac Peterson
Ann Taylor

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Welcome to the Winter 2022 Issue of HOPE Magazine

There is so much to be excited about. This month's issue of HOPE Magazine features a wonderful mix of brand-new contributors as well as some of our legacy writers – all coming together between these pages to share their experiences with you.

Our Winter 2022 issue leads with the story of how the Brain Injury Hope Network came into existence. Our origin story follows the path of what has become one of the largest brain injury support networks on the planet. Amazingly, next month we'll be celebrating our TEN-YEAR ANNIVERSARY. It's going to be an exciting month with lots of surprises, giveaways, and more. Be sure to follow our Facebook page for details. A heartfelt thank you to MedRhythms for sponsoring next month's festivities.

While December is a wonderful time of year with lots of goings-on, for those of us who call the colder climes home, it's also slip 'n fall season, so be careful out there.

Happy Holidays!



David A. Grant
Publisher

WINTER 2022

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The Hope Network Origin Story

By David A. Grant



With next month's ten-year anniversary of the Brain Injury Hope Network, what better time to revisit our roots, to share the story of how a cycling accident in a quiet New Hampshire town grew into a global initiative to support and spread awareness about brain injury. While it's not a tale as old as time, it's quite a story. And if you are taking the time to read this today, then you are part of that story.

Long a proponent of support groups, when my own life was interrupted by a traumatic brain injury back in 2010, I knew that peer support was vital to moving forward. I was struck by a teenage driver while cycling on a cold November day and catapulted, against my will, not only down Main Street but also into a strange new existence – one I knew nothing about.

In what amounts to what time has shown is more than a coincidence, shortly after my accident a brand new support group formed quite literally right around the corner from our home. And if you haven't yet guessed, it was a brain injury support group!

Every month, our group got together to help each other learn about navigating life after brain injury. There were guest speakers, holiday parties, cookouts, and more. As a group, we grew collectively in ways that supported all who attended. We found humor in uncommon places and went through countless boxes of Kleenex during our first year. I cherish the people who became part of the very fabric of our lives. None of us chose brain injury. We were Fateful Friends, the name given to a small Facebook group that started so that we could stay in touch with each other in the weeks between our monthly meetings.

“Long a proponent of support groups, when my own life was interrupted by a traumatic brain injury back in 2010, I knew that peer support was vital to moving forward.”

To say that lives were changed, and quite literally saved, by our support group is an understatement. I can say from my own experience that there were very dark times that I walked through. A big part of not giving up came from seeing others walk through the same challenges. Support groups can and do save lives.

From that small face-to-face support group, a small Facebook group then followed, allowing us to stay in touch during the month-long stretches between our meetings. While that small group has long since faded away, the seed was planted.

In January of 2013, I started a small Facebook community page. I did so with no expectations, and with only the hope of creating a safe place for people affected by brain injury to come together, learn from each other, and support each other, all the time knowing that they were in the company of others who understood.

It's been a decade since that time. In the years since the small online family that I envisioned has grown into one of the world's largest communities of its kind. With members in 60+ countries and over a million user engagements a year, watching this community grow and flourish has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. From our very active and engaged social community to the ongoing publication of HOPE Magazine, it is an absolute certainty that many millions of people have been uplifted by the compassionate content that has been shared over the last decade.

Walt Disney once said, "Let's not forget that it all started with a mouse." My own spin on this is a bit different. I try never to forget that it all started with a cycling accident on Main Street in my town. My thoughts are about the concept of our lives having a predetermined path. I'll never know why the universe singled me out that day. But I can say this: I am profoundly grateful for the life I live today, living in the knowledge that perhaps the path of others is a little less dark.

I wish you peace on your journey.

Meet David A. Grant



David A. Grant is a freelance writer based out of southern New Hampshire and the publisher of HOPE Magazine. He is the author of "Metamorphosis, Surviving Brain Injury." He is also a contributing author to Chicken Soup for the Soul, Recovering from Traumatic Brain Injuries. David is a BIANH Board Member. David is a regular contributing writer to Brainline.org, a PBS-sponsored website.



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The research study is conducted by Weill Cornell Medicine. ENHANCE is a Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC) funded by the [National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research](#) (NIDILRR; grant number #90REG0012-01-00)

Charting a New Path

By Ann Taylor



I am now in year seven since my traumatic brain injury (TBI). TBIs are like snowflakes; each one is unique. I am sharing some of what I learned in case it may help those with TBI and their families. If you only remember three items from this article, I suggest these: focus on what you can control, break down big tasks into small pieces that you can do, and be sure at crosswalks to stop and look in all directions (even behind you!) when the sign says you can Walk.

My TBI occurred when I was walking for my health. I waited for the crosswalk's sign to say "Walk". When it did, I saw cars slowing down on three sides of the intersection, so I thought it was safe. I started to cross, but I do not remember the rest. I was on a one-way street, and I was told an SUV Tahoe hit me from behind.

"I was hospitalized in ICU with a closed head injury for about three days, and then transferred to a rehabilitation hospital for about three weeks."

I do not remember what is hopefully the most expensive helicopter ride I will ever have. I was hospitalized in ICU with a closed head injury for about three days and then transferred to a rehabilitation hospital for about three weeks. I had a TBI with vision, hearing, speech, and balance impairments. I had a broken right ulna (I am right-handed.), and a jaw that could not open the width of a cheese sandwich. Both injuries took nearly a year to heal.

When I woke up in the hospital, I was asked what I wanted for breakfast. I desperately looked for a menu to which I could point. I was unable to say the words. I had thought that year was going to be great for me. I had a rare disease for over 20 years. Hooray, I had just been started on a new drug that greatly improved my symptoms. Also, my husband and I had scheduled a vacation to England to celebrate our 40th anniversary.

Even some bad situations can have some good. The rare disease had given me an important lesson. I still do not know why I have it, but I quickly realized that between it and my weakness from the accident, I could stay angry with the lady who hit me or choose to work on getting well. I chose the latter since even an inch of progress most days was better than nothing.

Here are some tips I learned along the way.

- *Be sure to tell your doctors about any symptoms that do not seem normal to you. I kept thinking my hearing was not working properly, so I mentioned it. When I was sent to a specialist, he said not only was my hearing affected, but I had a bigger problem. I had lost a significant amount of my peripheral vision.*
- *It is natural to feel that life is unfair when you get injured. I think life just is and dwelling on the unfairness does not change what has happened. Learn from whatever occurred and try to find some aspect of it you can control. For example, it was my choice to work on speech, vision, hearing, balance, jaw exercises, etc. through speech, physical and occupational therapy. In the beginning, I was exhausted, and the tasks seemed daunting. Even though I could do only a little bit at a time, it paid off in the long run.*
- *My brain gets distracted easily. My speech therapist suggested I get an appointment book not only for appointments but also for daily tasks. I tend to “overdo” and it helps if I trim down the list.*
- *I find that I procrastinate or get confused over large tasks. It helps me to break down bigger tasks into smaller ones that I can handle. For example, one year I wanted to clean out my office closet. It had 14 shelves. I found it helped to do one shelf at a time and set a timer for say 10 or 15 minutes. If I tried to do more than that I felt nauseous, and that was a signal from my brain to quit.*
- *Okay, compared to what I used to be able to do, that is a tiny amount of work. I tend to criticize myself for what I cannot do at all or do as well as before. My occupational therapist reminded me that the past is OVER. I get depressed if I focus on what I cannot do.*
- *My psychologist suggested making an Accomplishments List. It helps me to compare myself to Ann Version 2.0, the woman who emerged from the ICU. I write accomplishments down every month or so. By looking back, you can see how much you have achieved.*
- *Discover your own “workarounds” for difficult tasks. I have issues with loud sounds that never bothered me before the accident. For example, when I start a laundry load, I go outside or go to a far room in the house. I also sometimes use headphones or earplugs to attenuate the sound.*
- *Some tasks make my brain really tired, such as grocery shopping. I have found that just making the shopping list is hard, so I usually make it the day before. I have a Word document with aisle names such as Produce, which makes it easier.*

I am fortunate to have a caring spouse who made my rehabilitation a priority. I was unable to drive at first and he drove me to my many appointments. We did not make it to England for the 40th, but we got to travel! My friends were very kind, too, and helped with meals, writing Thank You cards, etc. Now that I am in year seven, I can see more clearly what I can do and what my limitations are. Now it is my turn to help my husband with his Parkinson's Disease. I need to create some new "workarounds" and lessons to be an effective nurses' aide.

This quote has inspired me before:

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Lao Tzu

I hope you can find effective strategies for coping with TBI, such as focusing on what you can control, breaking tasks into smaller pieces, and watching out at sidewalks. Try comparing yourself to you after the traumatic brain injury. Then chart your path for the new version of yourself.

Meet Ann Taylor



Ann is retired and lives in northern Michigan. She had a varied career from being a clinical psychologist to a change, learning, and empowerment leader for a major corporation. Among Ann's interests are horticulture, nature, walking, reading, and poetry.

Join our Facebook Family

What do almost 40,000 people from 60 countries and five continents all have in common? They are all members of our vibrant Facebook family at [f/braininjuryhopenetwork](https://www.facebook.com/braininjuryhopenetwork)





Next-Generation Neurotherapeutics

MedRhythms is pioneering the development of next-generation neurotherapeutics designed to improve walking, mobility and related functional outcomes via a proprietary, patented technology platform. Our platform combines sensors, software, and music with advanced neuroscience to target neural circuitry. Reach out to us at hello@medrhythms.com to learn more!

Thirty Years After Brain Injury

By Justine Johnston Hemmestad



Coming up on the tenth anniversary of *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Recovering from Traumatic Brain Injuries*, in which my story was included, I was thinking of what ways I was still the same and in what way I may have gotten better (since I understand that recovery will be an ongoing process for the rest of my life). It's so important to share stories, mine is what it's like thirty-two years after the injury. Maybe it will give someone hope to know what the future may hold for them, or in what ways they can manipulate their future by understanding their injury and the ways to cope with it.

I don't feel like I've gotten worse, but I'm able to identify the effects of my injury much better. Early on I didn't recognize that aspects of myself were due to my injury, but now I do. I realize I still have the worst trouble getting lost, I could get lost going in a straight path if someone wasn't with me. I still can't cross a road by myself because I can't gauge the distance of the cars or the timing between them. My sense of direction is nonexistent. My dizziness is still acute, but now I know the movements and positions that make it worse, so I can manipulate it to a point. I'm still very weak, but I don't try to lift what I know I can't and fail at it. I'm still tired (it's taking a lifetime to shake off the drowsiness of my coma), but I try to get sleep or at least rest. I know how vital sleep is to recovery from brain injury, and that may be one of the most important things supporters need to know.

“Early on I didn't recognize that aspects of myself were due to my injury, but now I do.”

Even though I don't feel like I've gotten worse and am just more acutely aware of the effects of my brain injury – I'm more self-aware – it seems even harder in a way because I feel the pressure of not forgetting. I know it's not age and I've always had these struggles post-injury, so that's a little odd to feel like I have to explain to someone now that it's injury and not age.

There are other things like the cluster headaches that aren't as frequent, and like the dizziness I have, I can manipulate it to a point. Also, I simply don't do what I know I can't, so there's a lot less failing that I notice – as an example I don't cross a street by myself or go anywhere I know where I know I'll get lost, and as a result, I'm not as panicked as I used to be.

Though I still have these struggles, I still feel the pressure of not being able to do what those around me can and getting frustrated that I can't. Writing is my way to adjust to myself as I am now, as well as to clarify the world around me and understand whatever may be happening and continue to heal (I believe writing has helped my memory and organizational skills). After writing my first book with this method of understanding in mind, I began to find how much the research for writing in itself helped to clarify my thoughts. Writing about stories that are set in historical events helped because of the research I do. Taking classes helped in the same way – I studied and researched. It all focused my mind and I truly believe it was the key to my (ongoing) recovery from brain injury.

I still feel like I have to compensate for having a brain injury, which is a struggle in itself. I'm not what I am on the surface, and I feel like people expect me to do more than what I can, so I don't reveal myself to people easily. I often feel that I have to hide who I am to be treated like a "normal" person, or so people think I'm not just coming up with excuses for not being able to do things.

These are just some of the ways my brain injury still affects me, over thirty years after my initial trauma. My brain injury was very severe with frontal lobe and brain stem hemorrhaging that required surgery. I hope that this can give other people who are recovering insight into what the future may hold for them. There's never an end to recovery, most importantly, and there are ways to live with the lasting effects of brain injury and work it into your life in a meaningful way. Brain injury has in some ways made my life even better than it would have been if I was never brain injured. Life is much deeper, and I treasure people and experiences in a way I don't think I would have been able to otherwise.

Meet Justine Johnston Hemmestad



Justine Johnston Hemmestad is a wife and mother of 7 children. Justine earned her BLS degree from The University of Iowa. She is an editor, and the author of three novels and is included in several anthologies, including Chicken Soup for the Soul: Recovering from Traumatic Brain Injuries.

Look Before You Leap

By Ric Johnson



Nineteen years plus another month equals the day I call my "brain day." Before Oct. 18, 2003, I lived a pretty good life. Grew up in the '50s; graduated high school in 1968; joined and served in the US Navy during the Vietnam War; graduated from a tech school; married a wonderful, lovely woman; found a good job & career at a library system; had a son and daughter. Had a great time being a dad and husband. Not a perfect life, but nothing to complain about. Then when cleaning gutters on my house, a chore I had been doing for more than 13 years, I fell from the ladder. To say my world changed is a fact of life.

Spent a month in a coma, finding I need to wear a protective helmet until doctors were able to replace the bone they removed from my skull (four months later), not being able to talk and understand others, and needing to relearn everything I took for granted.

The first month in one hospital, the second month in another hospital, third month in a third hospital. In the fourth month, I was released and sent home. Started physical, occupational, and speech outpatient therapy which became a 1-year process. But through hard work, great therapists, and my family, I graduated from that too.

In October of 2004, I was able to go back to my pre-injury job full time, not the same job, but close enough. The next six or seven years were trying to let my life back together. To counteract the side effects of a brain injury I thought that perhaps a new hobby, playing a musical instrument, would work to help with short-time memory, and yes it has. Before my retirement, aphasia was pretty much a non-issue because I talked with people five days a week nonstop.

“In October of 2004 I was able to go back to my pre-injury job full time, not exactly the same job, but close enough. The next six or seven years were really trying to let my life back together.”

But now, especially days when I don't see or talk to anyone, except my wife, aphasia is an ongoing day-to-day issue. Even talking on the phone is hard for me not to use the wrong words or understand what the other person just said. PTSD is a "look before you leap" issue, as the last thing I want is to fall once again. And something my family shouldn't have to face again.

In 2010, I wondered if there were others who survived a brain injury. If there are others, where are they? Why haven't I even met one? So, I searched and found there was a brain injury support group in the same rehab center where I did all my therapy sessions.

I walked into one of their meetings and just listened. Did not introduce myself or tell my story, just listened. In the end I grabbed a copy of the meeting calendar and thought maybe, maybe not, to go to the next meeting. But during the next few weeks, I knew I had to go back because I finally found others who could understand me and my pitfalls.



I couldn't wait to go back and have been a member of that group for twelve years. I became a co-facilitator for the group five years ago and continue to be thankful for everything the group provides, not just for me, but for everyone who comes to our meetings. There are so many techniques that a member mentions that they, and others, can use to keep themselves moving forward. And in my humble opinion, moving forward is the key.

Doctors like to tell survivors, and their families, that recovery is a one- or two-year process, what you see is all you get. Doctors are often wrong. Recovery is a full-time and lifetime process. We have to believe in ourselves. Yes, I have lost pieces of my pre-injury life but most importantly I can't let those pieces define me, only I can define myself.

The past is the past, we are living in the present, in our current life, and living as we decide what fits the bill. To decide to speak my mind and let people know that I may look normal, and the same as others, but I am a brain injury survivor. To decide what I can or cannot do, to decide it's OK to ask for help. Being here now is my key to life. What I did was great, and fun, before my injury, I loved my pre-injury life. But I refuse to worry about those losses. They came and left.

I will create new memories, find new friends, and find new paths. I will create a new me who can laugh at any side effects that can come up without any reason. I will, because I can because my brain is still healing. I'm not at 100% of the "old" me, and maybe never will be, but I'm a lot better than I was a day after my injury. As long as I refuse to stay in place, moving forward is better than focusing on "what if."

Meet Ric Johnson



Ric Johnson is a husband, father, and grandfather. A survivor of a traumatic brain injury survivor of 19+ years. Ric is also a member of the Speaker Bureau for the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance and facilitator for The Courage Kenny Brain Injury Support Group.

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10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

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Together to End Stroke®

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Learn the stroke warnings signs

F.A.S.T.

Face
Drooping

Arm
Weakness

Speech
Difficulty

Time to
Call 911

Every 40 seconds, someone in the U.S. has a stroke.

It could happen on your street, in your workplace, at a store where you shop — anywhere. Your readiness to spot the stroke warning signs and call 911 could save a life or make the difference between a full recovery and long-term disability. That's why it's so important to learn the stroke warning signs and urge everyone you know to do the same.

The faster stroke is treated, the more likely the patient is to recover.

In fact, stroke patients who are treated with the clot-busting drug IV r-tPA Alteplase within 90 minutes of their first symptoms were almost three times more likely to recover with little or no disability.

In some cases, a procedure to remove the clot causing the stroke is also recommended. Ninety-one percent of stroke patients who were treated with a stent retriever within 150 minutes of first symptoms recovered with little or no disability.

The thing to remember is that stroke is largely treatable. It's a matter of getting the right treatment, right away.

Stroke.org

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Walking in the Herd

By Isaac Peterson



Well, it happened again last night, that thing I do all the time where I'm out walking at night, and out of the blue, a thought or a memory hits. I've written about that before, and this is one of those times I have just got to write it down.

In college, back in Wyoming, I made friends with a group of people from Jackson, Wyoming, near Jackson Hole. I would go there with them on school vacations and make visits over the summer. We got to be good friends and it was always non-stop fun, real fun. They were truly funny and listened to some of the best rock around, but lesser-known stuff like *Mother's Finest* and *Legs Diamond*. They were some of the very few in my life who could hit me with something I hadn't at least heard about. And these folks could party like...well, nobody could party like these guys.

One year I went there over spring break. Spring can be so incredibly beautiful in Wyoming.

We went to a spot outside of town that had natural warm springs and laid down blankets, spread apart in the grass. I remember it being a fantastic day, weather-wise. It was just warm enough to not be too cold and there were flawless blue skies and no breeze. You can see further than you can imagine, up there in the mountains on a clear day.

It's not possible to describe that day, really close to the Grand Teton mountain range, near Yellowstone Park. The Tetons are beyond my ability to put into words. But I can say, without fear of contradiction, that the Tetons are cool and impressive looking. We laid there, out in the noonday sun on that perfect day, not saying much. It took away our ability to speak, but that silence during nature was so calming and so peaceful and life-affirming, just perfect contentment, and tranquility.

“It took away our ability to speak, but that silence during nature was so calming and so peaceful and life-affirming, just perfect contentment, and tranquility.”



Off in the distance, we noticed a herd of buffalo, just shambling around while they grazed. We were silent.

After a while, the herd started moving in our direction. They were walking slowly, and we could see there were buffalo of all sizes as they headed directly toward us. They were coming closer and closer and nobody so much as twitched, and finally they reached us.

We were all still spread apart, and the herd walked between us all, on all sides, in between the blankets. They were slow walkers, and it took quite a while for them to move on. They were close enough that we could have reached out and touched them. Such huge, gentle quiet creatures. No one moved a muscle or said a word the whole time. We all were just there, surrounded by buffalo. And we were all blown away beyond words. It was like we all were transfixed, caught in a magic spell. It was like we all, all of us young kids and all those beautiful animals, shared a spiritual bond.

We watched them as they slowly made their way past and watched for as long as we could see them. I don't remember anybody saying a word. It would have broken the spell and cheapened the moment somehow.

It hit me full force last night—*I have been in a herd of buffalo.*

It is beyond my ability to put across in words the feelings of that day—I don't even know if such words exist. I haven't thought about that in a long time. It obviously wasn't something I'd forgotten, just something I hadn't thought about in a long time. I can still see that day in my head and in high definition.

I have to say, looking back over my life, this was one of the absolute coolest things that ever happened to me. I have to say though that surviving a major stroke was up there on the coolness scale too. At times I've replayed that scene in my head when I've needed to relax and be calm.

If I have anything to be thankful for (and I do) it's that a stroke hasn't erased my memories. If it had, it would be as if that day hadn't happened. That magic day would have been lost to me forever. I'm not the same man I was before that stroke, and if there is anything I can be happy about it is that

he left me his memories, both good and bad, and this is one of the very best ones. He went through some very beautiful and fantastic events. Parts of that guy are gone now, left in the past, but he sure went through some great experiences, and he left behind the memories.

When I began my new post-stroke life, I didn't have to start all over again from scratch. I had beautiful memories to build on and to add to. I had great memories to guide me and to aspire to in my new life.

Of course, the bad memories are, but they serve as examples of things to avoid, moving forward. I have those beautiful memories and they help guide me in positive directions as I pick up the pieces and move on. If I live, those beautiful memories will too. For me, they are what life is all about. I know the loss of memory can be a huge issue for stroke survivors, but somehow it hasn't been an issue for me. I wish all stroke survivors could be as lucky.

And I also wish everybody could know what it felt like that day and experience that feeling every day. The world would be a much better place to live.

Meet Isaac Peterson



Isaac Peterson grew up on an Air Force base near Cheyenne, Wyoming. After graduating from the University of Wyoming, he embarked on a career as an award-winning investigative journalist and as a semi-professional musician in the Twin Cities, the place he called home on and off for 35 years. He doesn't mind it at all if someone offers to pick up his restaurant tab and, also, welcomes reader comments.

**SOME BRAIN INJURY SIGNS
AND SYMPTOMS**

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- Headache
- Dizziness
- Blurred Vision
- Difficulty Thinking Clearly
- Sensitivity to Noise & Light

Our New Normal

By Cyndi Kamps



On February 8, 2011, our normal world was turned upside down when Bob was hit by a car. He sustained a critical and severe closed head injury resulting in a diffuse axonal injury (DAI), and our new normal began. It took only a moment to change our world into a nightmare. This nightmare brought pain, heartache, and constant drama to everyday life.

My husband Bob was fifty years old when he suffered a severe closed head injury at the hands of an incompetent driver. As a crew member for the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Bob routinely shoveled tar into the many potholes on Michigan's weather-beaten roads. It was a Tuesday evening at 6:30 pm when the driver of an SUV slammed into two of the MDOT crew members resulting in Bob's life-changing and horrific injury (the second crew member sustained minor injuries).

There were many things in Bob's favor when the injury occurred. He was just one mile away from a level one trauma center, he didn't break any major bones, and his spinal cord was unharmed. And, he was "young-ish" (the trauma doctor's words). His journey over the next seven months brought him to four different institutions with many tragic, triumphant, and tumultuous days.

"There were many things in Bob's favor when the injury occurred. He was just one mile away from a level one trauma center, he didn't break any major bones, and his spinal cord was unharmed."

Bob spent five weeks in the critical care unit at a level one trauma center, where he was hooked up to all kinds of gadgets to keep him alive. He was kept in a medically induced coma for a few weeks to allow his brain to heal. As they slowly began to reduce the amount of the drugs, they were hoping for Bob to regain consciousness and interact with his environment. Unfortunately, he didn't progress as they had hoped.

We had a conundrum: his condition wasn't serious enough to keep him in critical care, but he wasn't well enough to move to a regular hospital unit.

After gathering information and talking to the medical staff, we decided to move Bob to a long-term acute care hospital (L-TAC). Bob spent ten days at the L-TAC where he continued to receive focused care. He also started therapy by receiving passive exercises where the therapists moved Bob's arms and legs for him. The therapists also positioned him to sit on the side of the bed. It took two therapists and about ten minutes to get him to this position. It was thrilling, exhilarating, heartbreaking, and tremendous to see him making progress. Heartbreaking because he had to go through it, but so incredibly exciting because he was making progress.

After ten days at the L-TAC, Bob improved enough to move to a sub-acute rehabilitation center where he spent three months gaining strength, and relearning to eat, walk, talk, and use his arms. He entered this facility requiring full care, including the use of lift equipment, called a "Hoyer," to get him in and out of bed, a tracheotomy for help with breathing, and the use of a feeding tube. At the end of the three months, Bob was able to transfer from his bed to his chair with just one person helping. He stood on his own two feet with no balance issues, his tracheotomy was gone, and he could eat and drink regular food – no restrictions. He did still have his feeding tube, but that was just in case of emergency (which never happened, thank goodness).

The last inpatient institution for Bob was the acute care rehabilitation hospital where he spent two more months with more intensive therapy, and they finally were able to remove the feeding tube. His therapy sessions consisted of physical, occupational, speech, and recreational therapies each for thirty minutes, twice a day. That's four hours of intense therapy. Thankfully, they split that up throughout the day and built in rest periods so his brain could have a break and he could remain successful in the therapies.

So, if you're keeping track, that's five weeks in critical care, ten days in L-TAC, three months in the sub-acute rehab hospital, and two months in the acute care rehab hospital. That brings us to the end of August 2011 when Bob finally got to come home. It was one of the most exciting and terrifying days of my life. He no longer required professional



medical/therapeutic treatments as an inpatient but still needed 24/7 supervision. After being near death, was he really ready to come home? I was petrified and over the moon all at the same time.

For the next three years, Bob continued physical, occupational, speech, and recreational therapy as an outpatient. He learned how to perform “activities of daily living (ADLs)” by adapting and utilizing tools that supported his limitations. Again, Bob had many things in his favor. The injury affected his right side. Thankfully, he’s left-handed! (Try brushing your teeth with your non-dominant hand. If you’re right-handed, brush with your left. Impossible.) His speech is clear but soft, which has improved and continues to improve to this day. He has mild aphasia, which typically happens when he’s overly tired or agitated. And, as I mentioned earlier, he didn’t have any other serious injuries. It was just all in his head.

So, Bob spent over four years in structured therapy. He officially graduated in June 2014. He continues a daily exercise routine at home, and he can walk when holding onto a railing. We don’t like to focus on what he can’t do but rather on what he can. He has physical limitations on his right side requiring a wheelchair to get around. His brain injury requires that he have 24/7 supervision for the rest of his life. A diffuse axonal brain injury is similar to shaken baby syndrome. There is damage throughout the brain making it very difficult for medical professionals to predict an outcome. This unpredictability worked in our favor because we had no expectations and any progress Bob made was and continues to be truly miraculous. Despite all that he’s been through, Bob continues to be a positive, uplifting, and happy man. It is truly a blessing and a joy to have him with us. We continue to be thankful and feel very blessed with the support from family, friends, co-workers, and people we haven’t even met.

Meet The Kamps

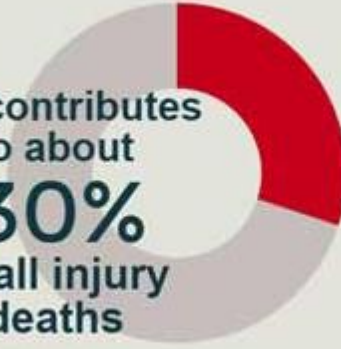


Bob and Cyndi Kamps grew up in Western Michigan and currently reside in the Grand Rapids area. Bob’s severe traumatic brain injury brought setbacks, highs and lows, and many tears. However, his wife Cyndi never wavered from her devotion, courage, strength, and love, a love which, along with a superb team of professionals, brought Bob through the worst of times and helped him regain hope and freedom. They enjoy golfing together using Bob’s adaptive golf equipment, vacationing in Florida, and having a cup of good coffee.



2.8 million
Americans sustained a
traumatic brain injury in 2013

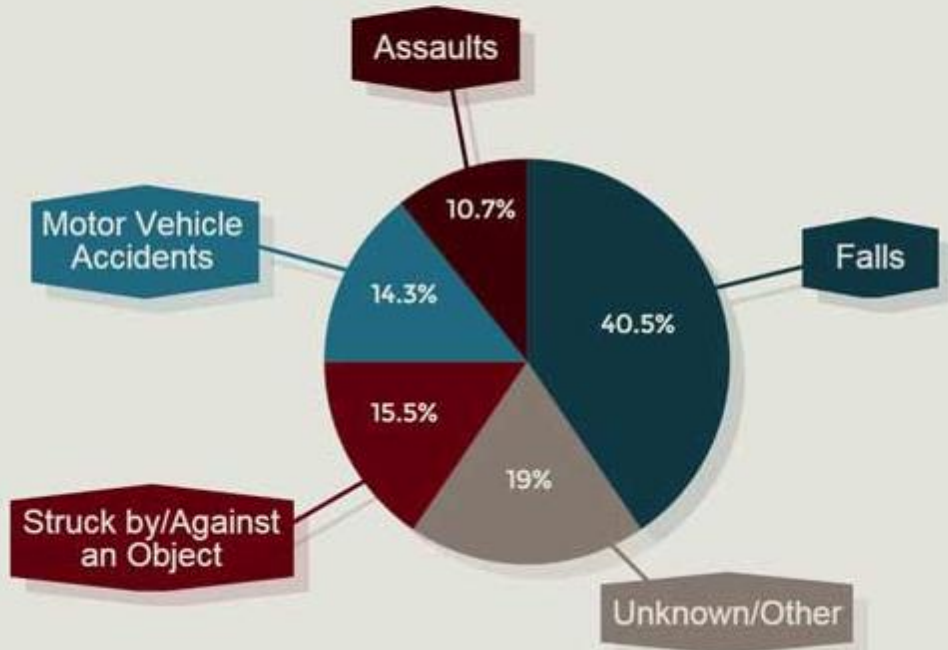
TBI contributes
to about
30%
of all injury
deaths



TBI Severity Index



Leading Causes of Traumatic Brain Injury



Coming Back to Life

By Karl Heller



It was a beautiful summer day eleven years ago in August of 2006 when everything suddenly changed for me. Just a few months short of my fiftieth birthday, I was living a gifted life. I had been an accomplished student (third in my high school class), a talented athlete (set records in track), and a sax player selected to my city's district band. I received full scholarship offers from colleges for each of these three skills, and I chose to go to West Point from which I graduated in 1978. After Army active duty service, I joined the working public and eventually found myself moved up to VP of sales for a local Dallas company. Yes, everything was going very nicely for me. I mention all of the above, not to try to impress you with how accomplished I may think I am, but only to point out how quickly things can change if you were to lose it all.

In an instant, a motor vehicle accident very nearly killed me, and I found out how dramatically things can change. I was on the way to a Rangers baseball game when I ran into stopped traffic for an accident that had happened in front of me on the freeway. While I was waiting to move past the stoppage, a driver behind me fell asleep in his car, while moving at full speed. He damaged ten vehicles but managed to hit me first. Fortunately for me, emergency personnel were already on-hand for the accident in front of me, and they were able to get to me quickly. They wrangled me out of my totaled vehicle, and after restarting my heart sent me by helicopter to the emergency room. The initial prognosis was not good.

“In an instant, a motor vehicle accident very nearly killed me, and I found out how dramatically things can change.”

Every rib in my body was broken in at least one place; both lungs were punctured, numerous organs were damaged, and in general, it was estimated that I had a low chance to survive (2 out of 15). After two weeks in intensive care attached to God-knows-what-all to save my life, I was well enough to spend the next three months in bed at the hospital. Then began the real hard part: therapy for the brain injury that I had sustained during my accident.

My losses were significant and numerous. I couldn't walk and used a wheelchair to move around. My entire right side was initially paralyzed, and as I healed, there were constant challenges with raising my right arm and moving my right leg.

The worst, however, was the discovery that I had completely lost my communication skills. I couldn't read, and upon testing was found to be able to identify only two of the 26 letters of the alphabet. Needless to say, I couldn't write anything because I couldn't recognize and spell the words out. I couldn't speak coherently. Initially, I used one noun to describe everything: "noodle."

In my head, I was saying everything that I was thinking, but I could tell from the reaction of those who were listening to me that something was desperately wrong. "Noodle" and "noodle" that was not getting the job done. As is blatantly obvious, the new me is very different from the old me described earlier.

After nearly two-and-a-half years of therapy and a lot of hard work by the therapists, I came back to life. I am now able to read at a post-college level. I can write to nearly the same degree. I am speaking beyond "noodle" now, and find many opportunities to talk to the general public about brain injury subjects. On the physical side, I have completed several 5K road races, and although my right leg still wants to drag a bit, I am planning to achieve longer runs. In all, I am very thankful that my accident happened while I was heading to meet customers for the game night out. Considered a business accident, I was fully covered by insurance to help with my recovery through the full two-and-a-half years that I continued to progress. Not a fraction of the brain injury patients that I met along the way were as fortunate as I was.

I was lucky to have had such support. The lesson learned is that recovery from a brain injury is most likely one of the hardest things that a person is ever going to experience. It takes hard work, persistence, a positive attitude, and help from people who know what you need to do to recover. The good news is that you can recover, and the better news is that the worst day of your brain injury was the first day. Everything gets better if you put in the effort. It is all up to you to continue working.

Meet Karl Heller



Karl Heller is an Ex-Officio Member of the Board of Directors, of BIND: Brain Injury Network of Dallas. Before Karl's traumatic brain injury in 2006, he worked as the Vice President of Sales for Southwestern Battery Supply in Garland, Texas. Karl earned a bachelor's degree in Engineering from the US Military Academy at West Point and an MBA from Oklahoma City University. Karl served for six years in the Army. He enjoys a good steak, cheering for the Dallas Stars and the Texas Rangers. Karl joined the BIND Board of Directors three years ago and also participates in the program as a team leader for the Wellness Unit.

Because I Can!

By Rosalie Johnson



When I go to Florida in my motorhome, it's a fresh start. Each day is planned and planned again, well in advance, using the strategies I learned while recovering from a Traumatic Brain Injury. On the road, I can only move forward. I can still remember my other life: work, volunteer, play, maintain a home, and still have plenty of time to spend with my husband Randy, family, and friends.

Like most survivors, I remember when that world crashed – December 8, 2001. In my new reality, I feel as if I am a child's toy top spinning so fast that the centrifugal force is randomly spewing away my thoughts and plans to be productive. Some days the top slows down, and on others, it rotates so quickly that it is all I can do just to hang on and ride.

Travel gives me back control. With my itinerary plan and the larders stocked, Randy tries to start the trip with me. We head south in the late winter. Each day we drive 250-300 miles easing into a routine and trying to miss any snowstorm in the forecast. Arriving at an RV campground, we level the motorhome, extend the slides, and connect the water and sewer.

Next, I walk the "Road Warrior" – my old Yorkie, Lilly. Then there is dinner to prepare, clean up, and finally sleep. The next morning the routine is reversed. Any items we used must be stowed, as they become projectiles while traveling. At some airport along the route, I usually have to drop Randy off to fly home so he can return to work. You should see some of the looks we get when driving our motorhome through the departure area of an airport! Being a pilot, he will be able to meet me at future destinations down the road.

"Like most survivors, I remember when that world crashed – December 8, 2001. In my new reality, I feel as if I am a child's toy top spinning so fast that the centrifugal force is randomly spewing away my thoughts and plans to be productive."

I spend a week here or two weeks there, eventually making it to Key West. Every day is planned, such as stopping for gas or groceries along the way, because once the RV is parked and set up, I can't just drive to any store. I get around on my bicycle for planned adventures.

I am very fortunate to have family and friends join me along the way. I love the company for exploring new areas but there is one stipulation: they have to be ready to bicycle or walk everywhere. Just ask my friend, Anne, about her "Vacation Boot Camp!" I have baskets and coolers to attach to our bicycles, along with a cart to carry groceries, laundry, or beach chairs.

When traveling alone, I am rarely lonely. Walking Lilly, I meet many other dogs. Each evening finds most campers at the waterfront to marvel at the beauty of the sunset. More bonds form. The people I encounter are from all over the world, and all share the same bond: "Wanderlust." In meeting so many interesting folks, the number of Traumatic Brain Injury and Stroke survivors is astounding.

With one particular couple, the wife suffered a stroke some years ago. Each evening her husband bundles her up and helps her into their golf cart, then drives to the waterfront to watch the sunset. Due to the severity of her aphasia, she is only able to speak three words. She will take each person's hand, place it on her heart, look deeply into their eyes and say "I love you, I LOVE YOU!" Is there any better way to share a sunset?

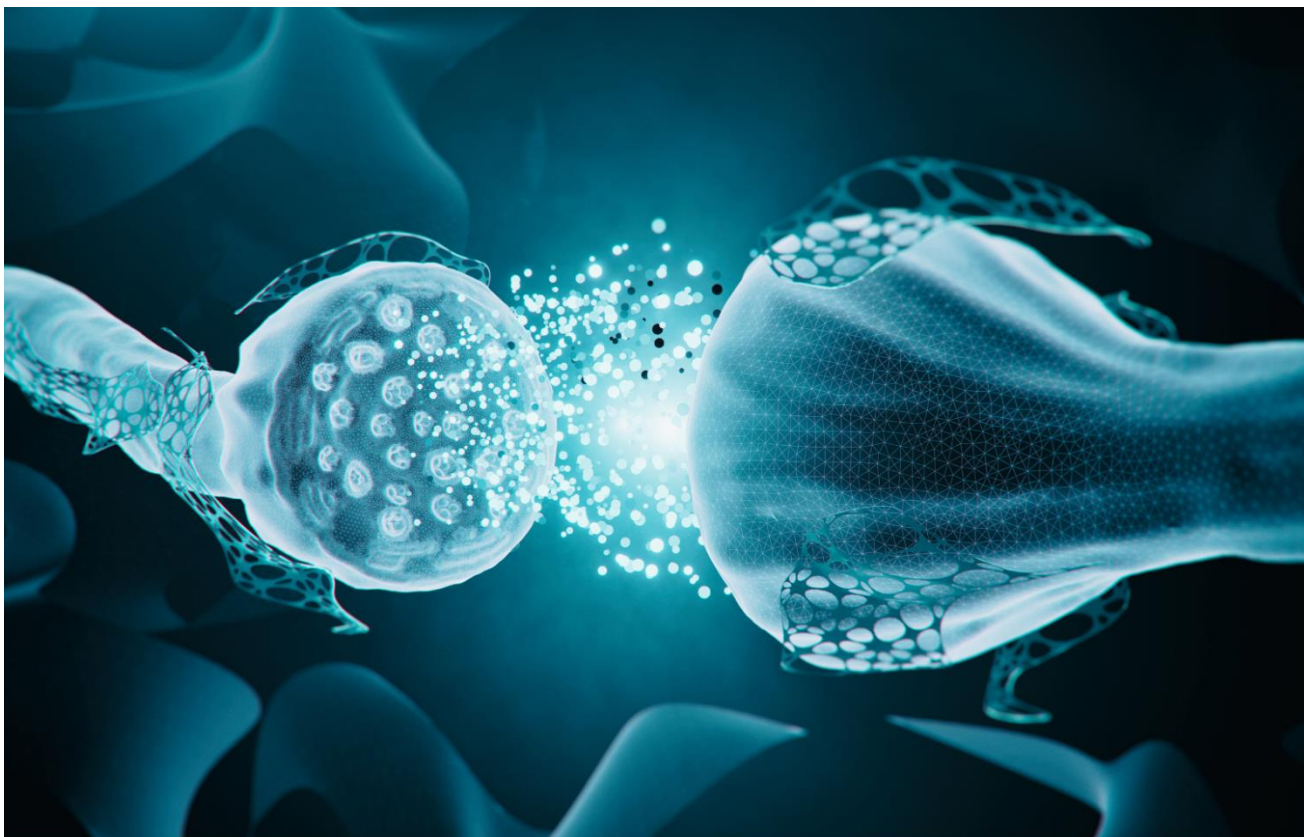
Along the way, I'm invited to join other RV'ers for potluck dinners, Yoga, airplane rides, museum tours, and much, much more. The people I have the pleasure to meet share so much of their lives with me. They are like little gifts. Each day I learn something new: the name of a flower or tree, or the mating habits of dolphins or alligators.

When learning that I am a Traumatic Brain Injury survivor, many other travelers will ask me how I can drive the RV and do all of the setup mostly alone. I respond, "Because I can!"



Meet Rosalie Johnson

These days Rosalie can be found running the Seacoast Brain Injury Support Group and has volunteered at Krempels Center in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. She is a multi-year Board Member for the Brain Injury Association of New Hampshire, and the author of the "Meet the Artist" article printed quarterly in HEADWAY Newsletter published by BIANH. And if you can't find her, she is probably on the road traveling in her motorhome!



NEWS & VIEWS

By David & Sarah Grant



We hope that you've enjoyed this issue of HOPE Magazine. Amazingly, this is our 70th issue. Over the years, we've rolled out a lot of changes to better reflect those we serve: those affected by brain injury of any kind.

So often recovery from brain injury does not mean getting back to who we once were. Rather, for many it is an opportunity to rebuild a new life, and to perhaps reset priorities. You can count on the same quality content that we've been bringing to you since we started publication back in 2015. With the new year comes promise, opportunity, and hope. While it's been a long-standing tradition to set goals and commit to New Year's resolutions, we are going to stay the course, and continue to bring you stories of hope, inspiration, and true victory of the human spirit.

Be sure to follow us on Facebook for next month's ten year anniversary celebration and another heartfelt thank you to MedRhythms for sponsoring our month-long celebration event.

Have a safe and happy new year!

David & Sarah