



WHEN CALLED...

“A TRUE LIFE CHANGING EVENT”

By

Dr. Adi Adins

Dedicated to my wife, Roberta, a victim and survivor, who refused to give up and kept fighting to stay above what many felt was an unsurmountable challenge.

I want to express my gratitude to Dr. John T. Braggio, Published Writers of Rossmoor club volunteer website manager for his help in editing and formatting this email log before it was made available from the "Articles" webpage, <http://www.rossmoor-writers.com/articles.html>.

To protect the anonymity of persons mentioned in this manual, I changed names and telephone numbers.

PURPOSE: My Personal Message to the Caregiver

My main goal is to help novice caregivers who are having the experience of suddenly becoming one for the first time and are completely at a loss to understand what is expected of an experienced caregiver. Even though each case is different, the following personal observations should provide some direction.

The medics will only tell you to be patient, because they are not allowed to give you any false hopes or predictions. At the same time, the medics have seen so many variations of patients' recovery processes that they cannot help you with an accurate prognosis. In retrospect, I wish I had something like this email log given to me to read in the ER, or later in the hospital, when I went through my wife's ordeal for the first time. It would have given me some idea of what to expect!

Hundreds of people undergo these unfortunate and unexpected experiences every day in ERs all over the world. Accidents, wars, sports injuries and fights happen each day and night. It beats any horror show for someone to sit in the reception room of an ER and listen to the agony and suffering of the friends and relatives of the victims. The ones who just got injured badly are often unconscious and unaware of their new "world" around them.

At 4 pm on December 1, 2004, I was informed that my wife, Roberta, was in critical condition, and in the hospital's intensive care from being rear-ended by a truck. I instinctively knew our lives will change from then on, as I frantically rushed to be by her side. My first decision was to remain alert and take care of myself so that I can take better care of her. I took OTC pills to get to sleep at night, and I was beside her the rest of the time.

After the first few hectic days, I started sending emails to Roberta's relatives and friends, explaining her daily condition and change in either direction, negative or positive. Even though she was in a coma, I also wrote emails to my wife, with the hope that

someday she will be able to read my thoughts as I experienced them at that time.

These emails now stand out like a daily diary of an unexpected and horrible event in a couple's life. By reading my emails, the reader should be able to understand the daily changes that occur in a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) victim. Of course, each victim is different, depending on the severity of the injury, and the area of the damage. Most of Roberta's right frontal lobe was involved. This part of the brain supports speech and reasoning.

Your most demanding and critically important job as the caregiver begins after the patient is released from the hospital. Changes in the house must be made, to make it safe for a TBI person, and to accommodate all the necessary requirements of sleeping, eating, bathing, and preparing for visits by in-home care personnel who may come to give physical therapy to the TBI person. The safety of the patient is of utmost importance.

Make sure that depression or bizarre behavior does not set in either you or the patient. If it does, then a need for psychiatric care should be pursued early. *Roberta used to wake me up in the middle of the night screaming and getting upset with her condition. This would get me upset, as I needed my sleep to take care of the demanding daily activities I had to complete.*

The hospital was slow in providing psychiatric care. At times we considered double suicide. We both calmed down after we got psychiatric help and medication - after almost two months.

You must keep the patient busy by encouraging involvement in different reoccurring daily events and future activities. You must understand and believe in the plasticity and potential recovery of the brain. The synapses will make new connections between neurons in the brain, only if the TBI patient is kept engaged. Always participating in new and diverse activities will surely help the brain develop, by possibly forming new connections between

remaining brain cells. At the opposite end of this TBI recovery continuum, I have seen many patients vegetate due to no one **actively** caring for them.

I got Roberta involved by having her join me in making travel plans and taking trips together, planning and building a new house, participating in various entertainment activities, and attending sporting events. We then turned our attention to how she can pursue her academic goals, as she was a Special Ed teacher. We decided together that the best course for her would be to go back to graduate school and get her master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, which she had always wanted to do, even before the automobile accident. Pictures of Roberta while in the hospital, immediately after the automobile accident, and her amazing recovery after going home are included below.

The patient will need a lot of money for future care. Social Security and Welfare checks will not be enough. Getting good legal help from an attorney who is an expert in such matters should be a must, if there was an accident. Your personal belief that it was the victim's fault is unimportant. A knowledgeable attorney, hired on a contingency basis, knows many ways to get the needed funds.

You may now have a childlike-adult making demands on you and whose whole welfare is in your hands. You must make all plans for future activities and get your patient involved in them. Be prepared that it may take many years for the patient to regain a near-normal state of daily functioning. Your patient's memory may be impaired, and copies of weekly or bimonthly activities calendar should be placed in different areas of the home.

The patient will be slow in getting ready, so that much planning to go places will be necessary. Having patience with the victim's habits of misplacing and losing things will require that you learn to control yourself, even under the most demanding circumstances. If you do become frustrated with the TBI patient,

make sure you quickly make up for your unintended temporary loss of personal control by quickly providing positive reassurances to the TBI patient. You will also need a handicap placard from the DMV.

Your patient may now have a weaker body of a much older adult. He or she will have balance problems and may be too stubborn to do exercises or use aids like a cane or a walker. Each fall could be another unplanned visit to the ER, thereby resulting in a longer recovery that could be accompanied by even more pain and anxiety. Make sure you are like a hawk watching every move that the TBI patient makes, or you will be the one who will be burdened with doing extra work during the long recovery period. Be patient even if you are accused of nagging by the TBI patient.

Providence has given you a new task: You have been called to perform new duties. Accept this new responsibility and do your very best to fulfill your new obligations. Those who have run away from this duty, of supporting the TBI patient, have had to live with a bitter conscience. You can still live a normal life separately, if necessary, provided you keep the TBI victim under proper care and comfort. You will be happier, in the long run, if you do. Those who have a purpose to live remain healthier and live much longer. This general rule applies equally to the caregiver and the patient.

You now have another reason to live, pray and complete a new and important duty. Be brave, and remember, you will not be alone. You and the survivor will be helped BY A SUPERIOR POWER. Some of England's Lord Nelson's last words were "Thank God I have done my duty." May this new energy guide you and be with you, always.

MY REASON TO WRITE THIS TBI MANUAL

I am hopeful that our experiences and the learned lessons included in this TBI manual will be read early enough by those:

- Daredevils who show off on freeways by making their motorcycles prance up as if they were on a bucking horse.
- Persons who put their bodies through dangerous feats.
- Who feel that violence is their strength and dare to spend their lives hurting and being retaliated by others.
- Who have no tolerance for people who have different opinions and beliefs.
- People who do not believe in peaceful living.
- Persons who have no love for their fellow persons.
- Who believe that evil acts are their right of self-expression in their lives.

But, this TBI manual is not written for the innocent victims who suffer from continued poor health, decreased quality of life, actions of innocent people or because of natural forces.

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF THE HANDICAPPED.

It is a world of:

- Pain and frustration.
- Loneliness, intolerance, and depressions.
- Canes, wheel chairs, walkers and special needs for transportation.
- Hospitals, ERs, medical and non-medical professionals, medications.
- Meetings and sharing your experiences with others with disabilities.
- Recognizing and avoiding those who make their living by taking advantage of the weak.
- Should have, could have, and would have.
- Challenge for survival and a better future.
- Hope, determination, prayers and *miracles* that will surprisingly *reoccur*.
- Suddenly realizing that the most important part of your body is a healthy BRAIN.

It is also a world where you will lose your independence.

Article Published on December 2, 2004: "Five vehicles in I-80 crash"

By Kimberly K. Fu/Staff Writer

A crumpled Toyota Matrix sits in an eastbound lane of I-80, west of the Travis Boulevard exit (Tod Rasmussen /The Reporter).



Photo 1: Roberta's automobile accident on December 1, 2004.

An unidentified woman suffered major injuries Wednesday after her car was struck by numerous vehicles on eastbound Interstate 80 in Fairfield before being run over by a tractor-trailer rig.

Because her identity was not released, her condition could not be ascertained. She suffered what authorities described as an "open hand wound" and possible head injuries. She was airlifted via

REACH helicopter to the University of California, Davis, Medical and Trauma Center, in Sacramento. The five-vehicle, chain-reaction crash occurred around 3:40 pm on eastbound I-80 about a half-mile west of the Travis Boulevard exit. Two cars - a white Toyota Camry and an iridescent gold Toyota Echo - were entering the freeway from the Auto Mall Parkway onramp when the Camry stopped, and the Echo slowed behind it, California Highway Patrol officials said.

Suddenly, the Camry merged into the quickly moving traffic and cut in front of a white Toyota Matrix, said Officer Amy Mulata. The Matrix driver slowed in response, she said, and the Camry took off.

But a white flatbed truck toting cargo and traveling somewhere behind the Matrix suddenly came upon the car, Mulata said. The truck's driver tried to swerve, Mulata said, but the vehicle still rear-ended the Matrix. It spun out across the lanes and rear-ended the Echo, which had barely entered the freeway. Next, the Echo spun out and struck a black Honda Civic.

Meanwhile, the Matrix was tapped by the Civic and was subsequently run over by a tractor-trailer rig. The truck crushed the front of the Matrix, shearing off the hood and crushing in the sides.

Traffic briefly came to a halt, with the lanes filled with stalled vehicles. Eventually, the fast lanes were cleared and a portion of the slow lanes were blocked to allow for emergency vehicles. That portion was closed for an hour and 45 minutes.

Off-duty paramedics stopped to render aid to the woman in the Matrix. They had to cut off her seat belt and apply pressure to her bleeding arm, said passerby Harvey Hartfield of Fairfield.

Civic driver Zachary Schneider, 24, of American Canyon, said events happened so quickly that he barely had time to react.

"All I saw was a whole lot of debris blow up and I slammed on my brakes," he said. The Echo spun his way, he said, and they collided. He didn't remember much else.

"To be honest, I focused on what was right in front of me," he said.

Fairfield resident and Echo driver Marguirite Jones, 21, could also barely recall the events as they occurred. She remembered slowing behind the Camry, seeing it cut in front of the Matrix, and then tragedy unfolded. The collision sent her Echo spinning across four lanes, she said, and she arced in a perfect circle.

She subsequently called her stepfather, Herman Gayles of Fairfield, to pick her up. Together, they tried to hash out the perfect way to tell her mother - who was calling Jones' cell phone - about the crash.

Gayles expressed thanks that his stepdaughter was only complaining of pain - to her chest and leg. She limped, but was fine.

"I wasn't scared because she was breathing and talking, so it was OK," he said.

Officials said alcohol was not a factor in the crash and all involved parties wore seat belts.

Anyone with information regarding the crash or the Toyota Camry is asked to call the CHP at 428-2100.

Kimberly K. Fu can be reached at cops@thereporter.com.

CAN YOU SURVIVE TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI)?

On that cool December afternoon Roberta, suddenly and unexpectedly, found a car entering a freeway ramp and stopping in front of her automobile on the freeway. She immediately slammed on the brakes. But, a truck, fully loaded with ceramic tiles, that was following too closely behind her, could not stop and pushed her under an 18-wheel truck in the next lane on her left. She was pronounced *dead* at the scene of the accident by the CHP.

Luckily, two paramedics who happened to be in a car behind her ran to help Roberta survive the near-fatal accident. They were able to stop the bleeding. The Emergency Crews had to pry Roberta out of the crushed car with the "Jaws of Life" and a helicopter rushed her to a trauma center, 25 miles away.

When I arrived several hours later, I saw Roberta lying still with her eyes closed and with blood around her pillow and bed sheets. Her left forearm had shriveled to the shape of a bowling ball, as the bones inside her arm were broken. There were medical students standing around her cracking jokes and laughing as she was just another patient.

I walked over to the back of a medic who was talking on the phone while looking at a monitor. I could see Roberta's name and her brain structures displayed on the monitor. I heard him say, "Looks bad, may not survive the night. Too much trauma with blood infusions all over the right frontal and temporal areas." He then took notes. When he turned to me, he was surprised to know who I was. When I told him of my medical background, he was sympathetic and explained in greater detail the damaged brain areas. He said that the prognosis was not good.



Photo 2: Roberta in the ER on December 1, 2004. On the seventh day, some of her tubes were removed and a hole was made in her neck to the trachea, so she can breathe without the tubes. Another hole was made in her skin to the stomach, so she can be fed directly. She remained motionless in this position for ten days.

I KNEW OUR LIVES WILL NEVER BE THE SAME.

This is Her Story

The story of how a TBI survivor comes through some of the worst experiences that fate threw at her.

That night the doctors decided to fix Roberta's arm and her broken clavicle with titanium prosthetics. No anesthesia was required as she was in a coma and expected to remain unconscious during the medical procedure.



Photo 3: Roberta (head and hair, bottom left) in the ER with her vital signs on the monitor (upper right).

Roberta stayed in a coma and did not move for two weeks. She was connected to monitors that kept beeping continuously, as streaming lights kept moving across the screen, from left to right and back again, after reaching the end of the monitor screen.

A hole was made in her skull to insert tubes to monitor her brain pressure. Her hair was shaved in the central area. She looked pathetically cute. I had to sit and wait and call a nurse when some bells would go off from the monitor. It was a routine occurrence for them to go off. I was surprised that the nurses seemed disturbed when I “begged” them to attend to Roberta’s urgent medical needs.

While your patient is in ER, Trauma Center, Hospital, or Rehabilitation Center make sure you or someone is present most of the time - making sure that all is being done. I had to call the nursing staff many times when the bells on the monitors would ring or Roberta seemed to be agitated. They get busy with other tasks and other patients.

Your patient may be in a coma. However, there have been instances when it may be possible to communicate at the subconscious level. With that belief, I used to get close to Roberta’s ear and using an authoritative voice like her father’s and calling her by her childhood nick-name, order her to wake up. I did that several times, and each time, I honestly, saw her eyes move behind her closed lids. At the same, time your patient may feel comfortable with your presence. This may be an old wives’ tale. At that time, I was drawing straws.

No one knew the outcome or would even offer a general prediction. I was told to just wait and pray.



Photo 4: Roberta in the trauma center, after most of her tubes were removed. Two weeks after the accident she was moved from the Trauma Center to the hospital, where she slept most of the time. More details are in the emails.

Roberta's closest relatives were several miles from where we were. I soon realized that as Roberta's husband I could be asked by the hospital to make important, and possibly irreversible, life and death decisions for her.

I decided to start sending emails to each of them so they can also help me decide what is in Roberta's best interest, and at the same time, it was my duty to keep her relatives informed.

Except for masking personal identifiers, these emails are reproduced below, as I wrote them during this medical crisis. I ask the reader of this TBI manual to "understand" that I was in a stressful state of mind and forgive me for including (on purpose) any grammatical errors or a possible temporary lapse in my train of thought. However, these original emails will help the novice caretaker to know what to expect.

After two weeks, Roberta's eyes moved behind her closed lids. Three days later her left leg began to move. Sometimes she would moan. After another week, her eyes opened, and she was able to answer simple questions, but only for a few minutes, before she went back to sleep.

The medical staff decided to move Roberta from the trauma center to a local hospital. I, who was beside her 12 hours each day, watched her being transferred to an ambulance. I followed in my car all the way, and then parked in the hospital's parking lot.

By the time I came into her room, Roberta was already in the hospital bed, in a special ward by herself. It was painful to hear people crying in adjacent rooms when their loved ones did not survive. It was now getting closer to Christmas and the medical support staff was getting short-handed. Very few doctors came to see her. Finally, one doctor, who was supposed to be in charge, came several days later. After examining her, she turned to me and said, "I feel good about her. She will do well." This was the first feeling of *mild* relief that I experienced in almost a month.

Roberta slept most of the time. When she was awake, she would recognize where she was and what brought her to the hospital.

She was not yet ready to fully grasp the medical complications surrounding her condition. On the day before Christmas she was transferred to a rehabilitation center several miles away.

Roberta now started spending more time in a wheelchair. Despite a small staff, due to the Christmas and New Year holiday season, some rehab work was started. It was painful to watch three people helping her to stand up from her wheelchair to the parallel bars, to encourage her to walk and do simple exercises.

Roberta was feisty, nonetheless. Most of the time, she *refused* to accept that she was incapacitated. She had to be restrained in a covered bed with straps. Even though her room was on the other side of the building from the entrance, there were times when I could hear her screaming voice, as I entered the hospital. There was another time when she scared everyone by getting out of her wheelchair and tried to walk away without help. Of course, after a few steps she fell, and was decorated with a large Band-Aid on her forehead. It remained there for several days.

I got used to be awakened at night by frantic calls from the nurses who could not calm her. When I would arrive at the hospital I could hear Roberta's voice from one floor away. She was hard to find, as she would move her wheelchair, with her feet, as if she were on a bicycle, all over the hospital. One day, they took out her trachea tubes and she started to breathe freely. However, two days later, she just yanked out her stomach tubes. The nurses were frantic. Yet, she survived.

I will save the gory details of her days at the rehab center and the outpatient care facility for later. She was able to come home after two months.

It is hard for me to believe the way she persisted in rehabilitating herself. She was trained as a Special Ed teacher. She pulled out all her written materials and retrieved personal knowledge to use

in her own rehab. She eventually did all the exercises she had to do to strengthen her body. She did this without complaining.

We soon moved to Southern California to be near her relatives. The nights were always difficult for her. Roberta often cried and woke me up several times at night. Many times, I would get impatient and angry at her for waking me up. We would end up saying unpleasant words to each other, which we would later regret.

The hospital did not have an available psychiatrist for us when we needed one, and we were kept on a waiting list. When I confronted the hospital staff with our serious emotional condition, as we contemplated double-suicides, we were able to see a social worker for a few weeks. She understood our plight right away. We were finally put under the care of a psychiatrist who gave Roberta medications to calm her.

Roberta and I remained busy by planning and taking long cruises together. She also became completely immersed in helping design of our new home, and then overseeing the building of our new house by the construction crew we hired.

We finally decided to tackle a very difficult challenge - for her to study for her master's in rehabilitation counseling. Her choice was to attend the master's rehabilitation counseling program at San Diego State University (SDSU). This university allowed her to enroll on probation for one year only, because of the lingering side effects of her TBI.

After the one-year probationary period ended, Roberta had successfully completed *all* graduate school matriculation requirements and was permitted to continue in the master's program as a regular graduate student.

While enrolled in the SDSU graduate program, she became a compulsive student and studied every day, from six in the

morning until ten at night. She took her books with her everywhere. She would even study at various sporting events and entertainment functions. She used her computer to do her homework. She wrote and wrote on reams of sheets of paper. She became relentless on reaching her goal. Finally, she passed her two-day grueling final exam for her master's degree in rehabilitation counseling.

I have never seen anyone as proud and happy as she was that eventful day when she walked unassisted, up the stairs, to receive her master's degree diploma in rehab counseling from SDSU!

If ever there was an example of an unbeatable person, it is my wife, Roberta.



Photo 5: Roberta's graduation photo with earned master's in rehabilitation counseling from San Diego State University on April 25, 2012.

My UNEDITED EMAILS TO RELATIVES AND FRIENDS:

Note to the Reader

Kindly understand that this was in an extremely stressful time in my personal life. The emails are reproduced here as I had written them, except for deleting personal information such as names and telephone numbers.

The reader should take special notice to the *miraculous changes* that occurred during Roberta's recovery. These improvements in reacquiring daily life skills and more advanced cognitive skills occurred because of medical and therapeutic intervention, and because of her strong personal will to again regain a normal life.

Subject: Roberta on Dec.-3.

Roberta showed some signs of awareness at intervals. She was able to respond to commands when told to cough, open her mouth, move her toes or squeeze our hand. She showed discomfort but was able to settle down when told. We can see she was trying to speak, and appeared to understand when we told her where she was and what had happened. All her monitors are working within limits. It is now over 72 hours since her accident. She is a fighter and we feel she will win. There was nothing negative today. We have to be patient and keep up our prayers for her. Tomorrow I will go to the church in Sacramento that she went to from childhood. I will try to persuade the priest to come and pray by her bedside.

Monday Dec. 6

Not a promising day. Roberta did not respond as well as yesterday. The intern from the neurology team showed me and my daughter A_____, who has been very supportive these last few days, the CAT scan that was taken two days ago. It showed extensive diffusion of blood in the right part of the brain. He said that that was not a good sign. We will know more in days, weeks or months. Keep praying.

Love Adi

Tuesday Dec. 7

Tomorrow will be a week since the accident. The hospital staff is concerned that Roberta is responding less than she did two days ago. They feel that she is neurologically deteriorating. On Thursday, they will remove her from the respirator and make a hole in her trachea so she can breathe. This will reduce her chances of getting any complications from the instrument. They will also feed her directly to the stomach. They feel that this is the best way. They say that when she recovers, those holes will heal up.

We have not given up hope, but we should be aware that according to them, the longer the response time, the lesser the chances of recovery.

I would prefer if some members from her family could come here, as I need support on some of the decisions I may have to make. I have spoken to M_____ today and am waiting for her to call back. I have enough room in my house, for anyone who wishes to fly own. Let me know.

Keep praying. Love Adi

Wednesday Dec. 8

GUARDED OPTIMISM is the news for today. Yesterday evening, after all the negative news, I watched Roberta lying there and suddenly decided to jump to her and started using strong and firm, but with love, verbal stimulations. I felt she was trying and responding. However, the nurse discouraged me. She is from an Eastern Bloc country and feels that no one should do anything except her. Therefore, I left.

Today, there was a more understanding and encouraging nurse who felt that Roberta was doing much better and encouraged me to continue my stimulations. Roberta reacted several times with positive responses. I did it several times. When I did my last at 8 pm, Roberta was moving both her feet on command, her mouth and face would twitch as if she was trying very hard. She gave good squeezes on my hand. Her mask under her neck, to hold up her head was removed from her face today, and she looked much better. Our goal is to make her open her eyes. Remember all her numbers on the charts are quite normal. I am insisting on the nurses to do the same.

Tomorrow they will remove the tubes from her mouth and place them in a hole in her neck. This will allow her to move her mouth even if she cannot speak. It will reduce her chances of getting any infection from the respirator. Its tube goes way in her throat. She will be more comfortable. It will all heal later on. The leading lady, Zeta-Jones, in the movie Chicago, had it once this way also.

I also had the minister on call come today and pray. Tomorrow I will have her Priest who she knew in Sacramento, come and do the same.

I look forward to her sister, M_____ coming tomorrow. In addition, her cousin R_____ may come next week. I know you all have your own responsibilities to attend to. However I am amazed at the number of people who have come to her rescue

and praying for her. We both appreciate your prayers, well wishes and suggestions.

The nurse today has a belief: God has a plan for everything. I feel the same way.

Love Adi.

Thursday Dec. 9

Roberta had her tubes moved from her mouth to her throat and stomach. She looked her stunning normal self. Due to the surgery, she remained sedated and we did not push her too much. There were a few responses, especially when Dr. P_____, who is her priest, encouraged her. He spent considerable time with and gave very positive opinions about her. He feels she will be OK. Her sister M_____ arrived and will be here until Tuesday. Her support and inputs are very helpful. From tomorrow on, we will keep up the positive stimulations and keep you in touch with the results. Keep up the prayers. We will be reading all your wishes to her. Tomorrow I will be asking her students to write something to her and we will read them to her. This was Dr. P_____’s suggestion. Some of the experiences of previous such situations that many of you have given us, has been very helpful.

Prayers Please.

Love Adi

Friday Dec 10

YES, YES, YES. She opened her beautiful blue eyes today.

Last night, her nurse told me that she had done so, and I was happy. However, today when she did it several times we were elated. She is still slow and confused, and grimaces when her chest fills up with stuff and they have to suck all of it off. She responds to squeeze and relaxing of our hand.

We were concerned about her motor responses to her left splinted hand and left foot. WE saw her lift her left hand, cast and all several times. There is slow movement in her left leg. However, she was diagnosed to have a ligament sprain, but no fracture from her first X-rays. Thus the infusions we have seen in her right temporal part of the brain has not affected her left extremities. We will know more in time,

Everyone who has seen the pictures of the bashed in whole front left side of her car is amazed that she survived. Even more surprising she still has both legs. There is less than eight inches of room between the bashed in door and her gear-shifting console. Just a few bruises and the left ligament sprain was all she got. Where were the airbags that were supposed to inflate on impact? Toyota will have to answer that.

The bill from the ambulance: \$974.00. The Helicopter: \$11,600.00. Yes! Four zeros.

HER WORTH CANNOT BE MEASURED.

Prayers please.

Love Adi

Roberta Saturday Dec. 11

There were tears of joy today as Roberta opened her eyes on her own and responded with us for 45 minutes. She would have gone longer but the nurses had to do some work on her. The tube from

her head has been removed as her cranial pressure has stabilized and she is wearing a hat now to cover the wild hairdo of the neuro stylists. I may be over enthused but she definitely responded to several stimulations. Of course, she is still sedated to relax her from pain from all the surgeries that were done on her. She is fighting bravely. She shows discomfort (which is good as a local response) when her trachea gets full of mucus and they have to suck it out by making her cough. Today they were talking of moving her to a X_____ facility next week if she can handle it.

Her sister M_____ is very helpful by being there all day with me stimulating and encouraging her I have good support from both my family and hers and I am grateful. Her cousin R_____ is coming on Monday and that will help us. All of you have been so good with all your love and prayers. Please continue with them.

Love Adi

Roberta Sunday Dec 12

We were advised that there would be ups and downs. Today was less than yesterday. She did respond in the morning, when Rev, Dr. P_____ M_____ and I read some of the letters from her students. However, the rest of the day she was just sleeping. All her vital signs are normal and the nurses are not worried. We were told that when she is ready, she will be moved to X_____ in Sacramento, as Vallejo does not have the right facilities for her care. That is a bummer of a drive. Any way her well-being is most important. Her cousin R_____ will be coming tomorrow for two days. Keep praying. This is all we can do.

Thanks

Love Adi

Roberta Monday Dec. 13

Not a bad day. Roberta takes long naps but does wake up and opens her eyes without being prompted. She did it several times today. Today, her eyes even moved as if she was wondering where she was. She is often uncomfortable and grimaces. She does appear to understand when we told her about her family members and her school kids' letters. She even made her forehead wrinkle as if she missed them when she heard their names. We are just hopeful she understands. She went for over two hours breathing without any help from the machine. Her cousin R_____ and sister M_____ were very helpful all day today.

Keep praying.

Love Adi

Tuesday Dec. 14

Roberta was resting today with very little response. M_____ went home. Roberta will miss her loving touch. She helped me a lot. Cousin R_____ and I spent the day planning for Roberta's future care and studying what is available at present. She will be transferred to the X_____ Hospital on M_____ in Sacramento where they have facilities like the ones at present. R_____ is great in getting information and has a lot of knowledge in these matters. I went at night to Roberta, she did open her eyes for five minutes, and I felt her squeeze. We appreciate all the help and love from all of you. Keep up the prayers.

Love, Adi

Wednesday Dec 15 See Rob Accident Fever

Thursday Dec. 16

WOW! "What a day this has been"

Roberta opened her eyes the moment I walked in this morning without any prompt. The rest of the day, she was more aware of things and responded too many of my explanations of what had happened. She did that over 50% of the time and then she would rest. She even tried to speak. She seemed to recognize the names, when I read to her the cards from her students who had drawn colorful pictures. She was still in pain and the hole in her trachea bothered her enough to grimace. Her temperature began to come down to normal and her doctor informed me that her lungs were normal and there was no pneumonia. Great... They did say that she had fever when she left U_____.

She was off the breathing machine yesterday for four hours and today, she was off it from 2:30PM until I left at 7:00 PM. They are planning to remove the tubes from her trachea soon. She will then be able to breath on her own and be able to talk soon after. She is now becoming aware of where she is. Her eyes are moving and she is wondering where she is until I explain and sooth her. I hated to leave her but they were getting her ready for a bath. I am anxious to see her in the morning. Let us pray that she continues. I am very optimistic.

Love, Adi

Friday Dec 17

Roberta was sedated most of the day today, as she was feeling uncomfortable. Guess as she becomes more aware, she feels the pain more. It is gut wrenching to see her in this condition. However, she would go in and out and in the evening, she became more responsive. I do feel she understand what I am saying. She is off the ventilator now and she is off the critical

care condition. I will be talking to her doctor who is in charge of her present and future care on Sunday. It looks like she is strong enough to move out of the intensive care area to a regular ward. Once her tubes are removed, she can talk and tell us more. After that, she will be moving to X_____ in Vallejo where she will go into full therapy. They have already started to give some therapy over here and I have been shown how to exercise her hands and ankles. We will just have to wait and pray. Thanks for all your sharing of my enthusiasm of yesterday. I feel that things will keep improving.

Love Adi

Saturday Dec. 18

Today Roberta had a great nurse, S_____, who did not sedate her, and she was aware of what was going on in between her resting stage. Her fractures are healing fine and they took the sutures today. I cannot keep count. There were over 35 of them. It took over an hour to slowly remove them and then Band-Aid them. Roberta was awake throughout the procedure. She raised her arm to look at the sutures and looked surprised. She was calm, brave and helpful. She nodded to our questions as to whether it hurt or not. She nodded when I asked her if she knew me and if she understood where she was. It is a joy to see her respond so precisely. She looks simply beautiful. She has a new hairdo. Call it "REVERSED MOHAWK". It is a two-inch crew cut in the center from front to back with her beautiful shoulder length blond hair gently resting in wavelike manner on both sides on the pillow. I read the cards that she has received, especially those from her school kids. She nods and recognizes them. She is progressing and the future does look brighter. Thanks for all the prayers.

Love Adi

Sunday Dec. 19

Roberta and I had a good hour and a half of quality time today. During that time, she not only recognized her class kids but also showed surprise at the newspaper article and the first page headlines she has made. She was tired the rest of the day. I spoke to her Dr. MT_____ today. She is definitely off Critical Care. She is still in a vegetative state since she cannot do basic functions by herself. The Dr. felt positive feelings for her.

Roberta's progress will be slow. She has suffered Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). We cannot accurately project how much any person with TBI will regain whatever damage has occurred. Each person is different. Most of the improvement occurs in the first six months. After that, it is slow. Earlier the awareness, the better the prognosis. Roberta is showing progress early. This is good. I will keep encouraging her each day. Wish she were closer to many of you. She needs variety and more stimuli. Keep praying.

Love Adi.

Monday Dec. 20

Roberta is staying awake much longer. She was already awake when I entered her room at 11:00 am. She later gave me two big smiles when I asked her. I will never forget them. Then she mouthed, "My back hurts". Later when I was exercising her fingers, she again mouthed, "It hurts". She nodded to knowing me, her being a teacher, remembering the names of her kids, and where she was. She is off the I.V. She is breathing well by herself through her trachea. Then she fell asleep at 1:00 pm and I went to lunch. She stayed asleep the rest of the afternoon. Unfortunately, she could not show her Dr. T_____ what she can do. However, her Dr. feels very comfortable about her and is very encouraging about her prognosis. She was taken out of intensive

care today and moved to a regular ward. Her Dr. feels she may be ready to move next week to X_____ in Vallejo where she would undergo further therapy over and above what we are doing at present and work towards full recovery. All your prayers are helping. If you do not get my e-mail for more than two days let me know.

Love, Adi

Tuesday Dec. 21

Roberta reacted well for almost two hours. There were the smiles and awareness like yesterday. Now she is beginning to feel pains and is uncomfortable. She tries to talk and at times, some sound does come out. "I have to go to the bathroom" was well mouthed. She moves about the bed. The best news today was that she could move her left very well. Her left hand has feeling as she complains when I try to stretch her thumb and first two fingers. The last two fingers are involved with her wrist fractures. Her right leg and right hand are not at all hurt in any way. As her spine is fine, she will not be in a wheel chair. Of course, when she is able to talk, she can actually tell us what she knows. When she got tired, I let her rest so she could escape the discomforts. However, she did open her eyes several times but did not respond to anything else. Our prayers are helping.

Wednesday December 22

Today was the best day of all. Roberta was alert for several hours. Her tube from the trachea was removed and we could hear her soft words:

Q. "What is your name?"

A. "Roberta"

Q. "What is my name?"

A. "Adi"

Q. Who is this person?"

A. "A_____" (my Daughter who visited her).

That was just the beginning. She responded with yes and no to almost every question that were asked by the medical staff. She asked to go to the bathroom and she meant it. She wanted to know the time, and the day. She understood about the accident. When she would feel anxious, I would sooth her and she responded with comfort. She was much happier with very few pains. She was so patient (no Pun intended) and alert when they would change her and when they took her tubes out. With the physical therapist she was able to respond to all her commands and was able to move both arms and legs.

I got a big smile and a kiss and

Christmas songs are soothing now.

Songs of love are now alive.

Birds flew in welcome forms.

A new miracle is given birth,

The sun then smiled. Its work was done.

Thank you for your prayers.

Love Adi

Thursday December 23, 2004

Roberta has not regressed. She continues to respond and is more alert. Today she reached what is known as a Rancho IV scale, which involves confusion, anxiety, and spontaneous unrelated words. It is normal for people with head trauma to reach this level. It is scary but her Dr. MT_____ had prepared me for it. She is calming her with non-sedating medications. I will be glad once she goes to X_____ in Vallejo on Monday. They will start actively rehabilitating her instead of just making her lie in bed all day. She is expected to go through the therapy for four weeks. After that, she will be sent home. They do not know how much she will be able to function mentally. According to them, she will need twenty-four hour care daily at that time. That is going to be difficult as I am all by myself. At present, she is improving very slowly each day. That is all that matters for now. Keep up the prayers.

Love Adi

Friday December 24, 2004

Christmas Eve and All's Well. Roberta keeps improving slowly. Today her priest, Rev. Dr. P_____ came very early and left a note informing me. Later, when I told her she remembered and said, "That was nice of him." We wish you all Happy Holidays. Our celebration is being beside one another. We thank you all for your support, suggestions and continued prayers.

Love Adi

Saturday December 25, 2004

Our Christmas was memorable. Roberta and I had longer talks today. She can remember many things. The best part was when she, without any prompting, sang the last few lines of a Christmas song that was playing on the radio. As the hole in her neck closes, her voice will get clearer. She also spent four hours in a chair and the physical therapist made her move her upper torso, which she did very well. They will do more with her at X_____, Vallejo when she goes there on Monday. All the best to all of you and keep praying.

Love,

Roberta and Adi

Sunday December 26, 2004

Roberta was alert most of the day and continues to shake her head as if she remembers a lot. As she becomes more aware, she feels her discomfort and complains a lot. Tomorrow she will be moved to X_____ in Vallejo where they are better prepared to give her the therapy that she needs. I will inform you to morrow about this new move. Thank you for your continued support and prayers.

Love Roberta and Adi

Monday December 27, 2004

Roberta arrived at the X_____ Vallejo safely. She did not do anything today. I hope that they will evaluate tomorrow. She thrashes about and is uncomfortable. They put her in a cage like

bed that is completely zipped so she cannot fall out. I will keep you posted with new developments. Keep praying.

Love Roberta and Adi

Tuesday December 28, 2004

It was a new experience for Roberta today. She was in her wheelchair and looked good in her every day clothes instead of the dull hospital ones she has been wearing since Dec. 1. She went through the following programs and their results. This is just to show where she is at right now. If you wish, you can print it out to compare with her future results:

1. Occupational Training, where cognitive and fine motor abilities are taught. She was unable to put a peg in a hole. She was unable to distinguish between a square circle and a triangle. She was able to throw a few small objects into a box.
2. Gait, where she was taught to stand with help, sit, and take a few steps. She was very weak and accomplished very little. Moving the wheel chair with her one hand (the other still in a loose cast) and her legs.
3. Speech training. She did not know day month or year. She knew her name. Named two countries out of three. Said I was from somewhere in the Middle East. Did not know her address or her city.
4. Physical therapy, where she was taught to move her limbs one at a time to build up her muscles. She can do just a few movements of pushing and pulling, and turning on her own on the bed.

She has good social skills, smiles a lot without any complaints. She tries very hard, and does not get frustrated. We should also remember that she is on medications for pain and anxiety. Other family members and staff told me that most patients are at similar levels in the beginning. This is considered the best place for rehabilitation in Northern California. The staff is patient and very dedicated.

I can be reached after 10:00am on my cell phone 707-_____. Roberta is in therapy from 8:30 am until 4:30 pm. She gets brakes and goes in deep sleep from fatigue during that time. If any of you wish to visit, Sunday would be best, as there is nothing planned on that day. Let me know. She may be awake on that day and it could cheer her up. However, do not expect too much from her and she may be babbling. Her concentration period is just for a few minutes. She remembers very little. She is at X_____ Vallejo on the third floor Rehabilitation area. The staff does not encourage calls from anyone except her immediate family. You can always call me. Thank you for all your love and prayers.

Love

Roberta and Adi.

December 29, 2004

Roberta is progressing and showing a few more cognitive abilities. She can now say the Lord's Prayer the alphabet and able to recognize forms. She is slowly gaining strength in her body and is able to sit in a wheel chair for several hours.

With this good news, and the prospects of her improving slowly each day, I will be sending you messages whenever there is a significant change. Therefore, should you not receive a message it is because all is going well. We have now reached a wonderful

state in our thinking. Instead of wondering if she will ever come home, it is now, what to do when she comes home. Thank God, she is at this level now. All her signs are stable and she is breathing without any help. Once she is able to eat, not need a catheter, and her fractures heal, she will be physically like most of us. Call me or send me an E-mail.

We want to thank you for your love, helpful suggestions and your prayers (please keep that up). We are sorry we were not able to get too involved in the holiday season this year. However, we do wish you all the best for the coming year.

LOVE TO ALL, Roberta and Adi

Saturday January 1, 2005

I was dreading going to see Roberta today as she was ranting and raving yesterday especially in the evening. Her main complaint was that she was scared and she did not want me to leave. So when the nurse called this morning and said that Roberta wanted to talk to me, I got prepared to calm her. Instead:

Me: "Hi Honey, how are you feeling?"

R: "I am fine"

Me: "Are you hurting anywhere?"

R: "No I am doing all right."

Me: "Happy New Year, Love"

R: "Happy New Year, I miss you. When are you coming?"

Me: "I am having breakfast. After a shower I will come over and spend the day."

R: "O.K. Come soon."

After that, we spoke for a few minutes more, as if there had been no accident and nothing had ever happened. She was as normal as she could be. I kept wondering if I was dreaming. When I (would you believe the phone just rang and we talked again and wished each other good night) reached the hospital, she was in her temporary wheelchair quite aware of what was going on. I then called all the relatives and let her talk and surprise, all who answered. This was Roberta's gift to all of us to start a new year.

So, with a very grateful thanks to God and all of you we wish you A Very Happy 2005.

With Love,

Roberta and Adi.

Tuesday January 11, 2005

Roberta was supposed to come home on January 19. Instead, it has been moved further back to Feb. 2. I feel they were just preparing me to be ready. I was concerned that she has not received enough time for therapy. I am relieved though sad, as we are both anxious for her to come home. She is progressing each day. She is now able to sit by herself without any backrest, stand without help for a few seconds and walks a few steps with help. She eats all her meals by mouth. Some medicines are given by the G2 tube, which is the last one, left to be removed. She goes to the toilet with help.

She is more alert. Last Sunday she said, "Wow what an accident. I am glad to be alive. Life is so wonderful; I am determined to get well." There were many such positive statements. She is aware of what happened, where she is and is able to talk to people on the phone. She has had periods of confusion and anxieties. She could

not recall the passing away of her parents and was frustrated that she cannot recall much of her past. We have assured her that she will regain her memory. She still has the clot in her left thigh, which is being treated.

She enjoyed the recent visit of her fellow teachers, two tennis friends and three of our neighbors. It perked her up as she now enjoys company and takes her away from boredom. You can call her directly at 707_____. Call her especially on Saturday afternoon or on Sunday when she does not have therapy. You are also welcome to visit her on those days. Call me to make sure she is available and you do not waste your trip. You can reach me on my cell phone at any time during the day at 707_____.

Thanks to all your prayers and wishes, she has surprised us all by doing so well. I am not sending her reports daily as I used to, but periodically when something significant happens.

Love,

Roberta and Adi

Summary of Roberta's Recovery

Roberta has been improving each day in many ways. Since the improvements were slow, I wanted to wait until I had some substantial information to send.

At present:

- She can now climb the stairs and comes down backwards with the help of her right hand grasping the rail. She can walk comfortably with her walker. She can walk several short steps without any help at all.

- Roberta's left hand is slowly taking shape. She can grasp light things with her thumb and first three fingers. She can read the paper holding it with both hands. Her grasp is fair and she does have a good grip as she squeezes my hand. She exercises it several times a day for long periods. She can shower on her own sitting down when she does not need a shampoo. She has taken up crocheting. It is slow and it frustrates her. I can hear words that would make a sailor blush. She can go to public restrooms alone. Women always help her. This is not the same for us guys. We would be told: "You should have stayed home, Buddy."
- Cognitively, she has a lot to overcome. Though her memory is good, she has difficulty in processing information. She cannot concentrate or pay attention for long periods. She cannot watch a TV program for more than a few minutes. She has spatial disorientation. She cannot organize and her judgment is impaired. She cannot do more than one thing at a time, nor can she initiate activities.
- Her speech is impaired. It is slurred and she has trouble finding words. Her conversation is mostly egocentric and repetitive. She has difficulty seeing how her behaviors can affect others. She has to have her hired caregiver or me by her side all the time. At times, it becomes overwhelming, as she cannot give me any space to myself. She wakes me up at least twice each night to go to the bathroom.
- She had home therapy for the last six weeks. She will now be given outpatient therapy wherein she will be going to the hospital and getting extensive work.
- Since she can now go to public restrooms, we have been going to the theater, movies and symphonies. She enjoys them very much. Her potluck Birthday party was a success with about twenty neighbors who have been supportive.

- Roberta realizes what has happened and what she has been through. At times, she gets frustrated and depressed. She is very glad to be alive and be able to enjoy life again. She knows she has received a second chance and is grateful to all who have helped us during this period. We have put our house for sale and will be moving to smaller one story house. We will move south to San Diego to be closer to her family members who she misses. We thank you for your prayers. She has come a long way.

Love and Peace

Roberta and Adi.

MY LETTERS TO HER

I wrote these email messages after she showed signs of slowly recovering. Roberta read these several months later when she began to settle down and started to understand what was going on around her.

I have included these to inform the reader of our experiences and what to expect.

December 18, 2004

My Dearest Roberta,

I have finally found the time and am emotionally able to come home and write to you.

My dearest these last few days have been completely devastating with the thought that you may not be part of my life any more.

To see you lying motionless in the emergency room after a harrowing drive. You were so bloody. Your wrist had folded to your elbow. Your arm looked like a football without the lace. I could see your red muscles in the open wound. Someone pulled up on your hand and it then looked like an arm. Then I saw them suture your open head through your hair. Later the doctors talked to one another saying that your chances were very poor. Then one of the doctors explained your CAT scan. He showed all the blood that was in your brain that may have damaged your brain. He said that your chances were very poor.

A_____ and M_____ came much later. A social worker X_____ helped me during that period. They took you to a room upstairs. You were connected with tubes and one through your brain to bring down the pressure, which was high. If they did not do that,

your brain would be squeezed downward. They planned your surgery for your arm in the morning.

I did not sleep that night. I knew that living without you would be a torture.

Today was the first day you showed a lot of awareness and I feel better that you will be slowly coming in my world. My prayers and those of all others are being answered. I will write more tomorrow....

December 19, 2004

The next day you were in Intensive care after the surgery. From then on, I had to watch you every day just lying still with those horrible tubes and braces to hold your head up, for hours, sometimes until late in the evening. It was miserable driving home alone not knowing whether you will live or die. I kept the phones next to me and took a Tylenol PM each night to sleep. I called each night and morning to learn of your progress and was always told that nothing had changed.

Days later when they removed the tubes from your mouth and put them in your neck, you looked so beautiful as I can see your whole face. The tubes in your head looked like a crown. You were my queen.

The drive to X_____ in a van was interesting as I drove right behind it most of the way. A stop light slowed me down. I was at X_____ waiting for you. That night you were thrashing your head and I was worried. They gave you more morphine to rest you.

Today you were so cute recognizing the name of your kids from their cards. Then you saw the headlines you made in The Fairfield Republic. It was so great to see you nod your head. I feel so bad you are going through this while everyone is celebrating the

Holidays. We will enjoy next Christmas with great joy with you beside me. You are too nice a person to go through all this, my dearest. I hate to watch you suffer at any time and this is so hard to watch you grimace with pain. I hate to leave you to come home. However, I have to take care of myself so I can take care of you. At the same time, I have to do all the other chores, like the lawyer, pay bills, and keep up with the insurance requirements.

Monday December 20

Today you gave me two big smiles when I asked. I will never forget them. It sent a chill through my back. You looked so lovely nodding your head to my questions, squeezing my hand hard enough to stop my blood flow. I love it. It was nice to hear you mouth, "My back hurts" and "it hurts" when I was stretching your fingers. In a way it is time you can share some pain. I have been hurting since December 1. You were off the I.V. today and were moved to the regular ward. I called the nurse at night and she told me you were doing fine. I came home a little early today to get my car lubed and write all our bills that had piled up. Your Dr. T_____ is very encouraged by your progress. She said you will be going to X_____ at Vallejo soon where you will get good therapy to make you whole again. You are so brave, my dearest. Most people would make a scene but that is not you. Our love will make you better and stronger and we will have a wonderful life together. I love you so much. I speak to I_____ and G_____ all the time to bring you home. They are the guys who are decorating your Christmas tree. They are the only ones I can tell my feelings to. I love you. Get well soon and come to me. I miss you so much.

Tuesday December 21, 2004

My Dearest it is so wonderful to come to your side each day and watch you making progress. Your smile is bewitching and I cannot wait for you to be by my side all the time. I hate to watch you in pain. However, the very fact you are feeling pain shows that you are healing at the same time. I wish I could afford to have someone next to you all the time. Giving you sedatives at present only slows down your recovery. You do have a wonderful doctor who is working to get you into therapy at X_____ in Vallejo. Then you will be closer and I can spend more time with you. At present two hours are spent in travel time alone. Christmas is coming and I am thankful to God that I will be next to you that day. You are all I wished for and all I want. Maybe if you can stand we will dance the New Year in. I cannot wait to see your lovely face tomorrow again. Goodnight my sweet. Sleep, so you can be awake with me in the morning.

Wednesday December 22, 2004

My Darling, You were magnificent today. When you said "Please help me" I was by your side and you calmed down and started to laugh and smile. Moved your head and later gave me my first kiss since the accident. Today, your tubes were removed from your neck and you were breathing all by yourself without any help. I heard your first words "HI" You were alert and smiled so many times. You were so helpful during the physical therapist's commands and you did everything even when it hurt. You are my miracle. My love, with each day of your progress I love you more and miss you so much. We will be together like before soon. God is answering the prayers of everyone through His Angels. Because you are the one who is so good and deserves all that He can bestow on you. He knows our Love for each other is in its purest form. I am so lucky to have met you and have you by my side.

Thursday December 23, 2004

My Love, your smile and your kiss is what keeps me going, knowing in the future you will be beside me. It is lonely to come home without you and worrying how those nurses are taking care of you. They do not even cut your nails or restrict you when you are scratching. Your hair has not been washed for so long and they just give you a quick bath. In intensive care, they were better but here one nurse takes care of five complaining patients and because you do not complain, they just leave you alone. Today you lay there all day. When you were agitated, I calmed you as best as I can and restrained you from pulling your G2 stomach tubes. Dr. T_____ had ordered a special bed for you, but they gave it to another patient. I am helpless. I have a sore throat today and I hope it does not get any worse. I will wear a mask and come close to you. I will be glad once they take you to Vallejo and start your therapy. They are talking of a daily 24-hour care for you after that. I do not know how I will be able to do that all by myself and how we can afford to hire a person for you. I do not want to put you in any home after what your mother went through. I can only pray that you keep on improving remarkably and we will not have to face any such thing. I am scared, but I know our love and prayers will pull us through. We really do not have any one we can rely upon at present. Take care, my Love. I will do the worrying for both of us. I live for your smile and your beautiful blue eyes.

Today I signed up with Mr. D_____ who is supposed to be the best in legal matters dealing with personal care. Hopefully he will justify our trust in him.

Friday December 24, 2004

My Dearest, Today is Christmas Eve. We would have gone to a midnight mass together. Instead, I went alone to All Saints, your

church, and thought of how you went there from childhood and were an alter person and how you must have spent such days with your parents. I can see you through other children that were there. I cannot understand why this suffering has happened to you and I worry of how well you will be doing in the future. We have had so little happiness together and I cherish every moment I have spent with you. I will not be able to ever see you suffer in any way. You gave me so much love and I have never poured so much for any one besides my children. Wish I can understand why this has happened. Are you being sacrificed for my sins? If so, it will be so cruel to you. You who deserve the best. I had planned to make you so comfortable during my life and after. I pray to God that I will be able to do that. I love you so much and I had to watch you go through convulsions today. They just left you flat on the bed when I was at church and then gave you some sedative, Seroquel to keep you quiet. You looked so helpless and sweet my love. I am crying as I am writing this. I do not know how many tears I have left. I am so alone. Oh God! Please Help Us. My only solace is I know that you will not remember your pain. But I will.

I left Channel 3 on your TV. The Pope will be giving his mass from the Vatican and you may see him. Tomorrow I will bring a radio so you can hear some Christmas music. Sleep well my Love.

December 25, 2004

Today is Christmas and you gave me the best surprise when you sang the last few lines of a Christmas song that was playing on the radio. It was so beautiful to hear you sing. I brought your radio just so you can hear some Christmas music. Today I am not crying as I now know you will be getting better and we will be spending beautiful years together. I was so glad to hear the nurse say when I arrived that you were calling for me. You remembered many things today. We talked about our trips and

the ones we will be taking. You kept saying, "I want to go home." I calmed you by explaining that I want you also, but you have to get strong first. You understood. Just keep progressing my love and these days of suffering will be forgotten as we enjoy each other with more love each day. You sat in the chair today for four hours and the physical therapist made you move your torso. You looked so cute doing it. You tried, but you were too weak to stand up. At U_____ in the ER, I saw them sew up an open wound in your head. I wondered why they did not cut your hair first. Later the person who sutured you even spoke to others how he had to suture you with all the hair in the way. Today an aide found that wound with sutures and your hair all mated and stuck to it. You did not complain when she cut all that hair with part of your scalp attached to it. I will be glad once you come to Vallejo X_____; today you were the only one who cared. None of my children even called to wish me. A_____ was gone to be next to her mother. I ate alone in Baker's Square in Vacaville. I miss you. Good night my love, until morning, when I will see you.

Sunday December 26, 2004

My Dearest, you were wide-awake when I arrived and after a few complaints you calmed down and soon we had some good conversations. I read you the cards that your class kids had written for you. Later, you did some good movements with the physical therapist. You looked as sweet as that doll that the toy maker made in "Tales of Hoffman" and also in CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG. Then you were awake but uncomfortable with your surroundings. "I want to go home. I did not ask for this. Get me out of here", were some of the demands and I kept answering and calming you. You wanted me to stay all night. I could not, as I have to do what I am doing at present each night, prepare your bag for tomorrow and take my rest so I can take care of you. I have been taking some pills to help me sleep. My arthritis in my knee and hip is killing me and I am taking Motrin to move about.

It is painful. However, I cannot stay away from you. These days will pass my love. You will recover well and we will be happy together again. Sleep well my love, tomorrow will be better.

Monday December 27, 2004

My Sweet Love Today was not very good. You came safely to X_____ Vallejo. But you could not remember much. They were too busy to do a good evaluation and your Dr. MT_____ after about 15 minutes left promising she will come back later which she never did. Maybe, they will do all the evaluations from different teams tomorrow. Then in the evening, you were uncontrollable. You kept thrashing about and shouting to get out, wanting to go to a meeting and such gibberish. It was so painful to watch one so sweet and innocent to be in this situation. My arthritis is killing me. I keep taking Motrin several times and I hope it does not mess me up. No one seems to give me any hope for the future. I wonder if you will even understand all this that I am writing to you. I worry as to how much you will recover. I keep praying.

Tuesday December 28, 2004

My Sweet you were so cute in your everyday clothes in your wheel chair. After 28 days stuck in a bed, it was great to see you like this. I sent the following in the e-mail to everyone. It shows your level today in the things you did:

1. Occupational Training, where cognitive and fine motor abilities are taught. She was unable to put a peg in a hole. She was unable to distinguish between a square circle and a triangle. She was able to throw a few small objects into a box.

2. Gait, where she was taught to stand with help, sit, and take a few steps. She was very weak and accomplished very little. Moving the wheel chair with her one hand (the other still in a loose cast) and her legs.

3. Speech training. She did not know day month or year. She knew her name. Named two countries out of three. Said I was from somewhere in the Middle East. Did not know her address or her city.

4. Physical therapy, where she was taught to move her limbs one at a time to build up her muscles. She can do just a few movements of pushing and pulling and turning on her own on the bed.

She has good social skills, smiles a lot without any complaints. She tries very hard, and does not get frustrated. We should also remember that she is on medications for pain and anxiety. Other family members and staff told me that most patients are at similar levels in the beginning. This is considered the best place for rehabilitation in Northern California. The staff is patient and very dedicated.

My dearest you are so brave and understanding. I pray God will give you the strength to get better enough to understand your present experiences. Can't wait to see tomorrow. Sleep well my love.

Wednesday December 29, 2004

My Dearest, you were the best present for my birthday, today. To be able to sit next to you, holding your hand and helping you is the best I could hope for. For quite a while, it was heart wrenching to wonder if you will ever come home. Now it is what to do when you come home. This is a super feeling. God has given you a new life. Now we both have had the same

experience. I was given a new life when I came out of my hepatitis at sixteen and have always been thankful to Him. We can now see the glory and love of God. We had ignored him and not saying enough prayers. We can see His mercy and not falter in the future. Our prayers are being slowly answered. Today you recited by heart the Lord's Prayer today. You showed many abilities and I felt for the first time since the accident that we were actually talking to each other. My Dearest, have patience, and get stronger so we can be together and enjoy our lives as we have done from the first time we met. I love you more than I can put in words.

Thursday December 30, 2004

My Love, it is so excruciating for me to hear you in pain and not be able to do anything but to watch them sedate you and then I have to leave you as you are in deep sleep. I wonder when these days will pass and you will be back with me. I miss your smiles and laughter. Today we might have gone to the Cal game in San Diego, since we were going to be there anyway to visit your relatives. Wish we had moved there already and you could have avoided all this misery. God has a plan. They say. I cannot understand what. To make someone as innocent and loving as you go through all this. We will just have to wait, pray and see. We will have happy times. Be patient My Love.

Friday December 31, 2004

My Sweetheart, You were so upset this morning and ranting and raving that you made me cry also. Later you calmed down and we had a nice day. Then you were hurting and wanting to go to the bathroom. Finally, the nurse went inside you and took out your stools. You were so constipated and they did not

understand. You refuse to let me go but I have to get away to maintain my sanity and get a little rest. After I left you to go to dinner, I called and was told you were asleep. This was New Year's Eve and I was so lonely. I went to see Ocean's 12. I could not understand it as my mind was with you. It had scenes of Italy. I was also asleep part of the movie and lost all track. After you come home, we can get a Video and watch it. I came to see you afterwards, you were still asleep, and I did not want to wake you. I wanted to bring the New Year in with you. This is our first without being on a dance floor and my first since the age of five. Well, it is nothing without you. We will really dance next year. My Love. Instead, I am spending these last few minutes writing to you. You are as close to me right now as you have ever been. Our spirits are together. My sweetheart. I love you so. Please be relaxed in the morning. I will come as soon as I can. Happy New Year. My Sweet Love.

Saturday January 1, 2005

My Sweetest, I am listening to the Blue Danube the traditional New Year music from our Vienna. Wish you were close to me right now. They are dancing in the hall where we listened to the same music when we were there. We will go again there soon. That is where we agreed that Lehar's waltz will be our song. Today was another red letter day in your recovery. The following was what I E-mailed to everyone:

Saturday January 1, 2005

You brought us so much joy to all of us without your even knowing what you were doing. This is how great you are. My sweet innocent Love.

Sunday January 2, 2005

My Sweet, we had such a nice day today. You went up and down the corridors moving your wheelchair with both your legs and right hand. We so wish you can use your left hand also. It will take time for it to heal. In the evening, you were in extreme pain and anxiety. It was so miserable for me to see you that way. I had to leave you in order for me to eat and sleep. I had been with you from 10am until 7pm. When I called later, they said you were quiet and the nurse was in your room. Wish these days will end soon. I am just living for you to come back all healed up and well. I am happy you are alive and sad that you have this pain. I feel so helpless as there is nothing we can do but wait and pray.

I love you so much.

Monday January 3, 2005

My Sweet Baby. Yes, you have become like a baby. It finally dawned on me that because of your mental state you are like a child who hangs on to her parent and does not understand when she has to be left with a baby sitter. "I want to go home." You scream. You go into a tantrum just like that. I love you for it and will take care of you, my love. In time, you will grow more confident of yourself and not be so scared. I come home each night and miss you. I write to you, send E-mails, pay bills, and handle correspondence. Tonight, I wrote to A_____’s family about how sorry we are about his passing away. He was a true friend to us. There is so much sadness in the world right now. Millions of people are suffering from the Indian Ocean Tsunami. God has kept us together and we will just have to wait and see what his plan is.

Goodnight my Baby. I love you and miss you.

Tuesday January 4, 2004

Today, my love, they took your catheter out. This only leaves you with one tube. Your feeding tubes. You spoke in German with your physical therapists and have won them over. You were so cute. Later, you sang our National Anthem before the USC game. We will just have to work on developing a firm stand when I leave you. Your tantrums upset me and I cannot sleep. I hate to see you unhappy. Think how I feel when you cry and are in pain. Love you.

Wednesday January 5, 2005

It was a good day today. My Sweet, you remained for a few minutes without me at times in your classes. You kept improving. I was surprised you knew what was going on in Iraq. I could not believe it. You did better in math also, and sat up for a full 25 minutes during therapy. They love you because they are from Germany and now I am learning some of the German words from you. You were good all day. Your people from the school came by. You told them you miss the children. You are my sweet Love

Thursday January 6, 2005

My Love, you were doing so well today and getting such good reports that it was scary when they found that clot in your left leg. Now you will have to be in bed until it clears. This will slow down your therapy sessions. It is good that A_____ discovered it during your therapy. The nurses should have seen it. Your throat wound from the tube is healed and you do not have to wear any gauze any more. This is nice. You will have a birthmark from now on. Your Dr. MT_____ said that you have been taking this Lomax for clots. I did not know this and it seems the doctor did not know either. She said that it was prescribed at X_____. Now

she will be changing the dose to remove the clot. Any way you just called and I talked to you. You were so sweet. I miss you too. Soon you will be home.

Friday January 7, 2005

My Dearest you were so good today waiting quietly for me. When I came, you were having your first bites and I was so thrilled to see you do that. You were sitting up in bed by yourself without any help. It was just wonderful. You could not get out today because of the clot. Your left hand fingers are beginning to move well. Later you got cranky and started talking about being afraid of dying. As you are becoming more aware you are getting unnecessary fearful. The doctor than assured you that you are being taken care of. Later after my assurances to you, and some Seroquel, you relaxed. I hate to see you at all unhappy. These days will pass. We will be together soon. I love your so.

Saturday January 8, 2005

After your morning tantrums, you were a doll the rest of the day. I fed you your meal and you were so good. You ate most of it. You were in a wheelchair most of the day until you got tired. Therefore, I could not feed you in the evening. You were so loving today. You caressed me with love and gave me a light chop chop. You show good long-term memories but loose on short term. We will have to work on that. You went to the toilet by asking for it each time. I am so proud of your determination. You talked to E_____ and J_____ today and surprised them. You are sounding so good. I am becoming impatient for you to come home so we will be together the rest of our years. Sleep well My Love.

Sunday January 9, 2005

My Darling, Today you really became aware of what had happened and began to understand what had happened and why and where you were. You were able to enjoy the view from your room window for the first time, and were glad to be alive. You could not remember that your parents had passed away. You remembered our home and the views. You were disturbed that you cannot remember too much of all these days that had passed you by. You remembered your school and what you did there. You remembered and recognized your kids when I showed you their messages to you. You said it was good to be alive and this was a beautiful world. It was fabulous to talk with you in a normal way and to see your memory slowly coming back. I fed you full three meals today. This will remove your last tube. LOVE, YOU ARE COMING HOME.

Monday January 10, 2005

Sweetheart today was not as good as yesterday for you. You were edgy because I had to work and was not there early enough. I was told that you walked between the bars. I was so happy to learn that. Then we tried you to get in and out of the car and you thought we were going home. It broke my heart to leave you. We have no choice. Soon you will get stronger and be able to do everything so that we can be together. Good Night Love.

Tuesday January 11, 2005

My ONE AND ONLY, I was preparing for you to come home but was dreading that you were not quite ready and could get hurt. I was relieved that they will take care of you for two more weeks. I think they knew it all the time but wanted me to get better

prepared. I am torn between my wanting you by my side in our home and being calm that this delay is best for you. Two weeks compared to our whole life together is worth the sacrifice. You did very well today. It is good to see you take your first steps like a child, learn some basic cognitive lessons, and to help you recall all that you have forgotten. You are born again, my love, and starting Life, The Great Adventure. So rejoice. My Baby, I love you.

Wednesday January 12, 2005

My Sweet, as you are becoming more aware, you are becoming more despondent and worried. "I don't know what to do. Tell me what am I supposed to do? I am so confused. What is reality?" are your constant laments. I keep trying to explain and you come back with the same questions several times until I lose my control and tell you to quiet down and relax. You fluctuate between short times of smiles but more of laments and crying. At times, you get upset with your aids and therapists. I have to be next to you before you will do anything they ask. You showed this type of dependent behavior at times even before the accident. We were very close. I will always love you and be beside you as long as you want me. These days will pass. I can hardly wait. I miss you at home. Sleep well LOVE.

Thursday January 13, 2005

Darling, you were sharp most of the day. I can see you are aware now and worried. You kept your chin up and bravely did well in your classes. You are walking and standing got better. You can now sit up without help. Your left hand is beginning to look like a hand now. Just the one around your wrist and hand now replaces the big cast you were wearing on that hand. I hate to leave you

in the evenings not knowing how you will be taken care of by a new aid. Tonight, just as I was leaving they said that they were taking you for an ultrasound. I just called. It is 9:38 pm. C_____, your nurse, who is nice, told me that the radiologist has not seen it and Dr. MT_____ will inform me in the morning. No news is good news. I have to work tomorrow, but my mind will be aching to get back to you. I look forward now a day to be with you, as it is fun since you talk in a normal way now. At times, you wander off into some delusion but you do come back. I love you so. MY SWEET.

HOME AT LAST

We had two nights of rehearsals at the hospital when I had to spend the nights with her in a room. We were given detailed instructions to follow, including my giving her a bath and taking her to the toilet and watching how she took care of herself. They wanted to make sure that both of us knew what to expect, and there would be no surprises.

Finally, just over two months after that awful day, on February 2, 2004, Roberta could come home. We had waited anxiously for this day. All the daily exercises and the stretching of muscles to regain her balance, speech therapy, hospital food, tying her to her bed posts and enclosing her in a net around her bed, medications, waiting for help and all my daily trips to see you were now behind us.

After Roberta came home, her rehabilitation took a different direction. We moved our sleeping arrangements to the living room, on the first floor of our home, together with all her toiletries and activities. We made the guest room into her temporary activity day room and used the downstairs shower to bathe her while she sat on a garden chair.

Our health insurance arranged for several in-home therapy and exercise sessions. A month later, she was able to use the stairs to go to our upstairs master bedroom and her own private room. I had to drive her to all her speech and physical therapy sessions, at different locations, which continued for several months. We also paid for the services of more private therapists.

Not knowing for certain what Roberta's future improvements would be, together, we decided to move to San Diego and to be close to her cousins. We built a house there which kept her busy. We also decided together how to make it possible for Roberta to finally pursue her desire to get her master's degree at SDSU.

It took her several preps, both private, in college, and my continued persistence to convince the SDSU Dean to give Roberta a probationary graduate student status for one year in the SDSU master's program. Many pretests that Roberta took required Roberta to be tested on multiple choice answer sheets. With her hands that shook all the time, she may know the correct answer but pointed to wrong one next to it. Her scores were low due to these uncontrollable handicaps.

Roberta demonstrated learning abilities as a graduate student at SDSU and continued to improve over time. After one year her graduate student probation status was removed, and she was given a full graduate student status at SDSU. She took an extra year despite studying from 6 am to 10 pm daily. I have photos of her doing her homework even at football games.

An important part of Roberta's graduate school curriculum required her to complete a practicum by going to several high schools in the San Diego area and work with Special Ed students. They were taught many skills: how to find jobs; how to present themselves at interviews; how to work with fellow workers in the workplace, and how to improve their job skills in the work setting. Since Roberta could not drive, a co-worker drove her. At other times, I or a private helper would have to drive her.

The faculty at SDSU was most helpful. Roberta finally took her final exams over two-days. It was one of her greatest personal accomplishments for her to finally climb the four steps and walk across the stage to get her master's degree in rehabilitation counseling. All the long drives, private helpers, tutors, private therapists, finally paid off, and she was again a happy and proud person.

We also joined several brain injury groups. By going to these meetings, we both learned about the first-hand experiences of other TBI survivors. These groups were very supportive – they helped us to cope with our own personal experiences. I was

surprised to learn that at least 25% of the TBI survivors were involved in motor cycle accidents. I became sad when I found out that some of them had been abandoned by their spouses, and relatives and had to fend for themselves.

These TBI support group experiences justified even more my personal belief that the only way for Roberta to get close to becoming normal again was to keep her brain busy for the rest of her life, by having her engage in different activities and goals. In the end, it was my sincere hope that we could again enjoy living together as a normal married couple.

Roberta's relatives were very understanding and supportive. However, we felt that we would be a burden on them as they also



Photo 6: Roberta and Adi on cruise, June 2013.

had their own lives and responsibilities. Since I am much older than she is, my chances of being the first to die were more realistic. When that day does arrive, Roberta will need someone to be by her side and help her with her daily needs. We both felt that, as more time passed, my own children may get closer to Roberta and will want to help her to live a full life. Furthermore, we felt that it would be good to get closer to my children especially my son M_____, T_____, and the grandchildren. We therefore decided to move back to Northern California.

April 2018

It has been over 14 years since Roberta's automobile accident, and we have both survived an experience that we wish will never happen to anyone else!

Yet it still happens every day. Daily, medical professionals in ERs are patching up new TBI survivors and calming their worried new caretakers.

Our love has grown spiritually deeper as we both need each other. We have many common activities that we love to do together. We are passionate about football, baseball, basketball, thoroughbred horse racing, bocce ball, theater, movies, light and heavy opera, musicals, snorkeling, and travelling in USA and to other countries.

Every few days Roberta surprises me by showing *new* signs of improvement and confirmation that she can eventually live independently. I find it especially gratifying when our friends remark on her ongoing improvements. I often feel that we are now living in a wonderland that only two can share.

Roberta and I have settled in Rossmoor, a gated retirement community, in the Bay Area of Northern California. Rossmoor offers many activities including free movies, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, a full-size state-of-the-art gym, activities like ceramics, lapidary, woodworking, and many others. Several dance, yoga and exercise activities are also offered. There are meeting rooms and two large event centers where free and some with affordably-priced shows are held. There is also a movie theater with free movies. There are over 200 clubs to satisfy varied interests.

Roberta now regularly pursues her artistic endeavors of lapidary and ceramics. Since Roberta still cannot drive, the free bus transportation available to Rossmoor residents can take her

anywhere inside or outside of Rossmoor – places to shop and restaurants in Walnut Creek.

Roberta has made many friends through her book clubs, women's groups and some wonderful neighbors. She continues to enjoy reading and spending time on her computer; she is now writing

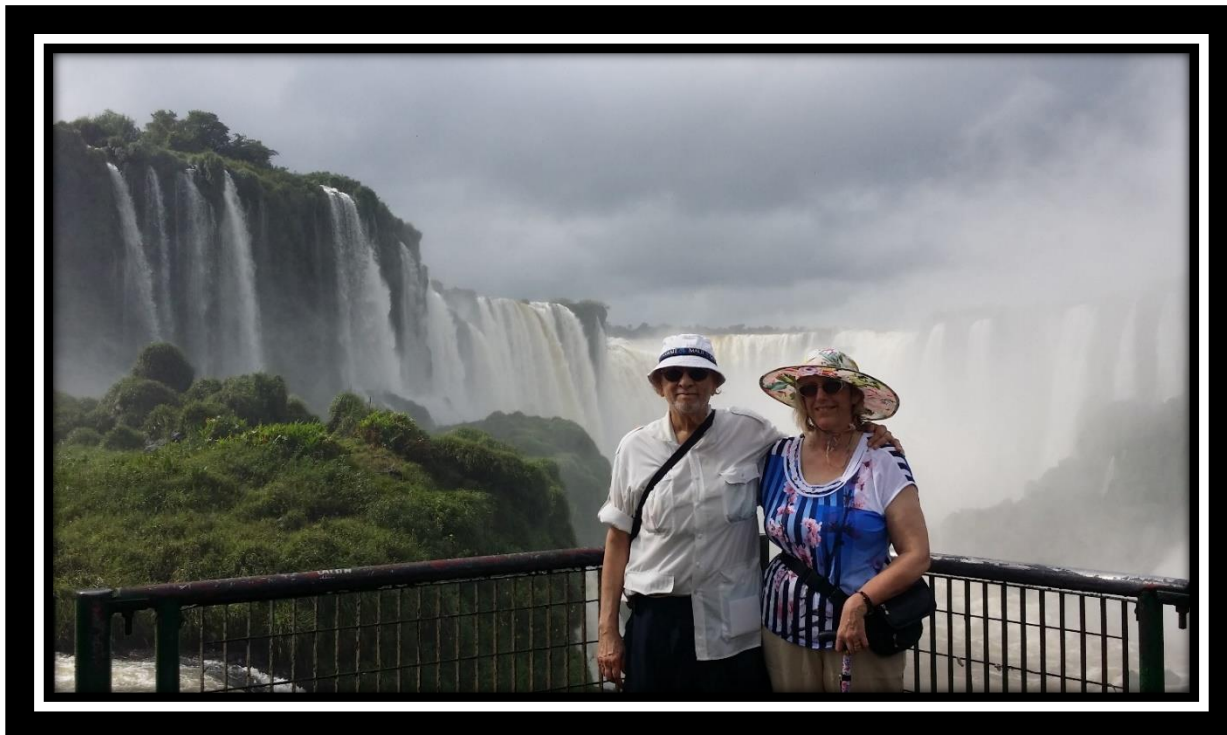


Photo 7: Adi and Roberta on vacation in Argentina's Iguazu Falls, on March 3, 2017.

about her own experiences of the automobile accident that almost killed her on December 1, 2004, and other important events in her life.

She now only has a *mild* slur in her speech, and she continues to rely on her walker and cane to move about. Overall, she functions quite well, especially among her peers and other persons in Rossmoor.

I had retired from my optometric practice in 2000, but I was keeping up with new medical skills in optometry and

ophthalmology. But, I had to give all that up. Roberta is my only patient now.

THE END