

Letting GO

The Monthly Publication of the National Stuttering Association



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It's Showtime!

Eager intern seeks opportunity

BY GAVIN KRIEGER

WHEN I REGISTERED FOR THE 2002 NSA CONFERENCE with Tammy, I said I was looking for a summer internship and that maybe a member of the NSA could offer an internship opportunity. She suggested I write an article, something I've been wanting to do for some time now. So here's my story.

My name is Gavin Krieger. I am going to be twenty-one in July, and I have had a speech problem since I was three. I was born in New York City, and at age ten, moved to Princeton, New Jersey. I spent my freshman year at Syracuse University before I transferred to the University of Southern California in Los Angeles where I am currently a sophomore and Fine Arts major. My goal is to pursue a job in the creative side of the entertainment industry. I am also a guitarist, artist and actor who has not let my speech come in the way of my goals.

Stuttering has been a part of my life for a long time, and until now, I seriously didn't want to change my habits. I went to a speech therapist in Princeton for years. Sure, I was fluent for a few hours after the session, but afterwards I would go back to my old ways.

When I was younger, I went to an NSA convention in San Diego, but I really didn't want to be there. I remember saying to myself, "I'll get over this problem, but talking to other people

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[Back in the mid-80s, I was invited to attend the premier of a 30-minute film on stuttering that was written, directed, and produced by Mark Allen Kaplan, a graduate student at the American Film Institute. It was a remarkable accomplishment in many ways, especially in how concisely it captured the essence of the stuttering experience. The fact that it was created by a student made it even more remarkable. Since then, Voice in Exile has received

hundreds of screenings...on Cinemax, at NSA chapters, and in schools across the country. No film better communicates to the non-stuttering world what many of us have gone through; and yet, the story is uplifting and transcendent. Mark plans to be at the Anaheim conference this year to show the film and answer questions. As a preview, we thought you'd like to read how the film came to be...in Mark's own words. - JH]



The Story of the Making of Voice in Exile

Answering the call of stuttering

BY MARK ALLAN KAPLAN

IT WAS THE FALL OF 1979 AND MY JUNIOR YEAR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. Professor Barbara Myerhoff entered the classroom, and began to teach us about personal and social anthropology, myths, and dreams. During one of the classes, Professor Myerhoff introduced us to the world of the Shaman, the indigenous holy person, or medicine man (or women). She explained to us that the shaman was the "expert of the injured soul" who has been called on by the spirits to heal themselves and others. This call often came in the form of a sickness that the shaman-elect would have to cure themselves of with the aid of helping spirits. Once they cured themselves by traveling between the waking world and the world of the spirits, they would have the ability to help others.

After the lecture, Professor Myerhoff asked me to walk with her back to her office. She said she was touched by my personal journal entries about my stuttering. Her voice softened to almost a whisper as she told me that it was believed that stuttering was one of the major afflictions that the spirits used to call someone to the shaman's path. Professor Myerhoff smiled, and told me that after reading my personal writings, getting to know me in person, and being deeply moved by my films, she believed I was being called by spirit through my stuttering to

heal myself and to help others.

At first I was just sort of numb. I thanked her for her insights as she went into her office. I walked around campus for a while in a daze and ended up in the courtyard of the Philosophy building. As I stared into the bubbling water of the circular fountain in the center of the

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From the Executive Director:

Because we stutter

SO OFTEN WE THINK OF THOSE THINGS WE CAN'T DO OR DON'T DO BECAUSE WE STUTTER. Last week I found myself surrounded by some of my NSA friends (a mix of stutters and SLPs). Looking around at each of us, I realized that the only reason I was sharing that moment with them...besides the fact they are wonderful people...is because I stutter. In fact, most of us stuttered in this group.

Each year, I am honored with an invitation by ASHA's Special Division for Fluency to attend their leadership conference. I am like a sponge—sharing ideas, listening and brainstorming about how together we can change the quality of life for people of all ages who stutter. For me it is a highlight of my year, and I appreciate this opportunity probably more than most people know.



• (Left to right) SCOTT YARUSS, LARRY MOLT, NINA REARDON, LEE REEVES, ANNIE BRADBERRY, BILL MURPHY, AND ANDY FLOYD MADE IT TO THE AIRPORT AT 6:30 A.M. THOUGH HIGH WINDS LIMITED THE BALLOON RIDES TO JUST BILL, THE REST PARTIED ON THE GROUND.

This year the conference was held in Albuquerque, New Mexico. For me this was extra special. A very dear NSA friend who I go back 20 years with lives there. Tom Fisher and I went through an intensive program together in 1981 and have kept in touch all these years. Tom has a pilot license to fly hot air balloons and he arranged to take some of us up early Saturday morning before our meetings began.

So at 5:30 a.m., I, along with NSA chairman Lee Reeves, Andy Floyd, Bill Murphy, and board members Nina Reardon, Scott Yaruss, and Larry Molt, climbed into trucks to see the sun rise from high in the sky. We were not sure if we would go up, but we were all still excited with the prospect that we would, conditions and



winds permitting. The winds did pick up, so only one person could go up that morning, and Bill Murphy was chosen.

I will never forget his face as the balloon lifted into the sky. Back on the ground and getting ready to go up again, Tom broke open a bottle of champagne to celebrate the new day...a balloon tradition I have since learned. Standing in a circle, glasses held high, we thought of what we wanted to toast. I looked around and realized that it is because I stutter that I was standing in the early morning light, surrounded by 80 hot air balloons and beautiful people.

I was there simply because I stutter.

We don't always notice the beauty around us — the people, the opportunities, these special times. We have memories or old fears that may haunt us. But there are those times when we forget the uncertain times and they are replaced with hope and vision and happiness to be alive.

As you read *Letting GO* and are touched by a story or the courage of another, savor the moment and realize that you too are blessed.

Simply because you stutter.

Annie Bradberry
Executive Director

Five Minutes in a Pressure Cooker

BY JOHN C. HARRISON

WELL, I WENT TO THE NEXT LEVEL OF COMPETITION WITH MY TOASTMASTER SPEECH. They held the District Four Conference in Seaside, California where I got to tell my story one more time. I had already won the area and division Tall Tales Competitions, but even so, my performance anxieties could not resist making an encore appearance.

Although I no longer deal with stuttering, I still on occasion go blank if my performance issues take over my mind. This is not so bad if I'm making a longer presentation, as I can pause, breathe, and collect myself. But with a tightly crafted five to seven minute talk in a Toastmaster competition, I don't have the luxury of taking extra time.

If I go over the allotted time by even one second, I'm disqualified.

I was not scheduled to talk until 4 p.m., so my feelings had a lot of time to stew. I finally went to the men's room, sat in one of the stalls, closed my eyes, and focused all my attention on what I was experiencing.

The first thing that came up was the familiar fear of going blank. That led to anxieties over what I would do if that happened, how I would react, how other people would react. Then I start thinking about what I would say to people afterward. Would I have to explain myself? Would they regard me differently? Would I have lost stature? How about my other club members who were in attendance. How would they feel? How would....

That's when I stopped myself.

By getting caught up in these issues, I was

being pulled into a different frame of mind, one that I did not want to inhabit. The name of that mindset was — "What Will I Do, Now That I've Screwed Up." The more detail I allowed that mindset to develop, the more real I made it, and the more I was giving it power over me.

So I tried something else. I simply acknowledged what was coming up, then switched focus and recalled in vivid detail the many speaking experiences in which I have had a comfortable connection with the audience. I ran through this routine a number of times because the old fears kept coming up. Each time, I'd acknowledge the fears, then focus on a positive experience.

What I did was counterintuitive. I've learned

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speaking out

comments and letters

KUDOS FOR THE TACOMA WORKSHOP

I just want to say a big thank you for the wonderful workshop in Tacoma this past Saturday. This was our second year attending, and I have to say it was so great. Scott Yaruss was a great speaker. So knowledgeable and kind. I was in tears almost the whole day. Not tears of despair but tears of hope. Hope that my daughter, Chloe, will be ok with who she is even though she stutters. Hope that she will not live in fear of being teased but that she will have confidence to face her fears. Hope that she will know she is not alone.

Annie Bradberry, you are a great role model for my daughter and we are so happy to know you. I have to let you know that on Monday after the conference, Chloe was teased at school by a girl who has teased her quite often and has



• CHLOE

really upset her in the past.

This time she called Chloe the Stutter Girl and Chloe told her, "So what! It's just a part of who I am and a part of life!" She feels so good about herself.

Thank you, for I know the NSA workshops have helped her so much. We are forever appreciative.

... Julie and Mark Whittaker

I can't thank you enough for a wonderful day with families. It gave me SO much to think about, and I felt so accepted and listened to. Your organization has always been a breath of lovely fresh air for those of us out here in the trenches trying to "do right" by and for kids.

I particularly enjoyed the various activities the children were engaged in, and certainly hope that the video will be available for us to enjoy in the future! I'm hoping to give a presentation to our staff as soon as possible, so that we can talk openly about some of the fears and feelings that many teachers are having around stuttering.

I am also looking forward to being a member of NSA. I deeply appreciate the offer for membership. I will gratefully accept it, and then become a regular paying member just as soon as possible.

Thanks again!!!

... Deana Border, SLP
Raymond, WA

PLANO CHAPTER TAKES A NEW APPROACH

Our new Plano [Texas] chapter had its monthly session last night with 10 folks in attendance. I've shared this before but wanted to reiterate again an unusual trend I'm observing in our meeting culture. Keeping in mind that it's not everybody's cup of tea, but we've gone about three to four monthly meetings now focused in a different direction than previously. Several members have individually told me they enjoy the new approach.

What are we doing differently? Basically, offering a "support meeting at the support meeting." Not being flippant but we've migrated away from structured agendas and presentations and simply gone essentially a "speaking circle-type" route. Each person takes a turn and just talks about an issue that they're dealing with at this time in their life in the real world. Something for which they need immediate support. Invariably, it's sparking instant feedback from others and stimulates an abundance of discussion. People tend to contribute ideas and suggestions for help without hesitation to one another.

What happens, I think, is that we each are walking away stimulated by a thought, idea or strategy to go home and implement in our life immediately. Certainly, forums to understand stuttering better, its causes, therapies, public figures, etc. are critical and important, and more important, excellent resources for those growth and educational opportunities have been made abundantly and easily accessible by the NSA to all members and to the public. We're trying to use the support sessions simply for that. Nothing else. And for us, that's working.

... Carl Roach

LETTERS FROM WALES

*A PWS has a stutter
A PWC tends to clutter
But a PWM
Is neither of them
It's a person who speaks with a mutter*

... Alan Badmington
Monmouthshire, Wales

YOU GOTTA SPEAK OUT TO BE HEARD

Recently, a syndicated piece by advice columnist Dr. Wallace omitted the NSA as a powerful resource for people who stutter. Debbie Nicolai decided to speak her mind. Her letter and Dr. Wallace's response are printed below.

Dr. Wallace: I have read your column for many years and have recently noticed that whenever the subject of the day is stuttering, the Stut-

tering Foundation of America (SFA) is always mentioned as the only reference. Did you know that there is another excellent stuttering support organization — the National Stuttering Association (NSA)? The NSA is a wonderful organization that my family has belonged to for a few years.

We have a 12 year old daughter who stutters. Stephanie has stuttered since she first started speaking and has been in speech therapy for seven years.

We contacted the NSA and the SFA a few years ago when we realized that stuttering was going to be a permanent part of our lives and we were looking for a support organization. We received literature from both groups and learned many facts about stuttering and everything that goes with it.

The NSA offered a children's workshop near our home and my daughter and I went with the intention of learning little and leaving early. We ended up staying the entire day and learning so much more than we anticipated.

While at this workshop we met Annie Bradberry, the executive director of the NSA. Annie told us about the NSA's national conference that was to be held in June. Stephanie talked about it to her dad and told him how important it was to her to go and to be able to meet other people who stutter and to share experiences, both good and bad, with them. We decided to go and made all of the travel plans.

As we were waiting for the conference, Stephanie decided that she needed to talk about her stuttering to the students in her classes. I feel that this speech was made possible because of the NSA. Stephanie sent a copy of her speech to the NSA, and it was printed in the NSA monthly newsletter *Letting GO*. The article prompted many supportive e-mails from people of all ages around the world sharing their experiences and offering congratulations.

The convention was held a few months later, and her speech and subsequent article opened many doors for Stephanie at the convention. Stephanie's confidence and acceptance level of her stuttering has soared in the past two years. I feel these changes are largely due to the NSA and the tremendous group of people and supporters.

Please Dr. Wallace, in the future, mention the National Stuttering Association along with the Stuttering Foundation when discussing stuttering. The NSA phone number is (800) 937-8888 and the informational Web site is <www.nsastutter.org>. Someday very soon I would like to open my newspaper to your column and see it begin with, The Stuttering Foundation of America and the National Stuttering Association, two of my favorite non-profit organizations.

... Debbie Nicolai, Ontario

Dr. Wallace's reply:

Debbie: Someday very soon is today! The Stuttering Foundation of America and the Na

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What's Happening?

the latest news • hot items • who's doing what • who went where • upcoming events • etc.

COMPILED BY KATHY OLISH

On May 4th, longtime member **Sebastian Scala** came in first place in the Toastmasters International Speech Contest at the District 4 Conference. Having won at the area and division levels, this time he competed against the best speakers drawn from 150 other clubs in the San Francisco area. In his seven minute speech entitled "Nothing to Fear," Sebastian spoke of challenging his fears and how for many years fear had put his dreams to sleep. He also talked about rising from the ashes of fear and taking control of his life. Sebastian will now go on to compete at the regional level in Los Angeles on June 29th where he will be one step away from competing for the World Champion of Public Speaking. Way to go Sebastian! We wish you the best of luck, and our thoughts are with you.

Also on the Toastmaster scene — **John Harrison** took home the Third Place Trophy at the same district conference in the Tall Tales competition. John recounted to 150 Toastmasters how he walked to the North Pole where he discovered a pole with magical properties that took 40 years off his life. He even pulled out a birth certificate to prove that he was born in Abe Lincoln's era. (He's shortly returning to the Pole for a "refresher." Anyone want to come?)

Steve Fogarty and his wife **Chris** are pleased to announce a new addition to their family. A.J. (Andrew Jefferson) Fogarty arrived on March 10th at 7:03 p.m., about 40 minutes after his parents reached the hospital. This kid couldn't wait! He was in such a hurry that he decided to be born three weeks before his due date. He was a little peanut, but totally healthy. So far big brother, Mason, seems very happy about the new addition.

The **Southern Indiana chapter** met on March 14. There were four members in atten-



• OVER THE YEARS, WE'VE RECEIVED MANY DONATIONS IN MEMORY OF A LOVED ONE, BUT NEVER FOR A DOG...UNTIL NOW. THIS IS SUZIE, LONGTIME FRIEND AND COMPANION OF BOB QUESAL AND HIS FAMILY. IN CELEBRATION OF SUZIE'S LIFE IN THE QUESAL HOUSEHOLD, WE PRINT THIS REMEMBRANCE PHOTO. VIA CON DIOS, SUZIE.

dance. They discussed how fast the year was going and how they will not be meeting over the summer. They also discussed how they could improve the chapter for next year. As the president of the chapter, **Amanda Hockenberry** feels that things have improved a great deal from her first year as chapter leader. **Dena Edwards** started their chapter and Angela recalls how nervous she was when she decided to take her place. Dena, who is a member of Toastmasters in Corydon, Indiana, also facilitated the activity that night. She introduced table topics to the group which led to a lot of fun. Angela is also interested in starting a separate group for elementary age children.

On March 15th and 16th, **Jim Abbott**, **Bob Birch**, and **Bernie Weiner** attended the Michigan Speech and Hearing Association Conference (MSHA) in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. The main purpose of attending this conference was to distribute information about the NSA and their local chapter (Royal Oak, Michigan). This was their second year manning a booth at this conference. They had one of the busiest exhibits at the conference and were able to distribute tons of information about stuttering, the NSA and their support group. Most of the attendees at the conference were either SLP's or graduate student SLP's from various colleges throughout

Michigan. The chapter is formulating a plan to give a panel discussion about stuttering at next year's conference.

On March 26th, **Bob Rochefort** from the Boston chapter was invited to speak to the Elementary School speech-language pathologists of the Weymouth, Massachusetts school system. His presentation went so well that Bob may have the opportunity to speak at a parent meeting next year. And on April 29th, Bob Rochefort and **John Carter** spoke at Northeastern University to a fluency class of 30 graduate students about stuttering support groups, the NSA, and how they have benefited from them.

Paul Engelman spoke at UW-Madison for the seventh straight semester this spring. In March, he gave a fifty-minute lecture, which included 20 minutes for a question and answer period, to a Rehabilitation Psychology course called "Individuals with Disabilities." To date, over 1800 students have learned more than they ever thought they would know about stuttering and people who stutter, thanks to Paul's informative presentations. If you are interested in giving informative speeches on stuttering to schools in your area, please feel free to contact Paul for more information at <pbengelman@students.wisc.edu>.

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• ATTENDEES AT THE APRIL 13TH WORKSHOP, "I LOVE ME, I LOVE ME NOT," HELD IN BUFFALO AND PRESENTED BY MARY WOOD (2nd from right). THIS WAS ONE OF MANY WORKSHOPS THAT MARY HAS CONDUCTED IN THE U.S. AND CANADA.

FIVE MINUTES continued

that my mind has a natural impulse to protect itself by forcing a feared object or event into my awareness so I can deal with it. This works well if I need to protect myself from muggers and man eating tigers, but it does not work if I'm facing a performance fear, because my unconscious mind will attempt to bring into being whatever I'm imaging.

I've learned over time that I have to acknowledge the fear (the way you have to acknowledge a pesky 5-year-old who wants your attention), but then be willing to let it go and focus on what I want to make happen. This involves trust. Trust that I can look at something other than the threat...and survive.

Easier said than done. Not thinking about a danger makes me feel vulnerable. I need to be willing to live with that vulnerability and know if the worst does happen, I can deal with it.

Toastmasters is a useful learning environment because it is so supportive of our stumbles. I did in fact go blank for a moment in my home club when I was first practicing the talk, but I was able to recover and go on with my story. It was a useful experience in that I learned once again that, although it could dent my ego momentarily, the experience wouldn't kill me. I also had another chance to practice how to keep my presence and focus on what I wanted to

say, rather than on the fear.

How did I do at the district competition? Well, I stood in front of 150 toastmasters and told my tall tale. My adrenaline level was high, and I guess because of that, I didn't say a couple of things quite the way I had practiced them. But of course, nobody knew. I got laughs in places where I wanted them, especially when, having described how I had walked to the North Pole and discovered a magical pole with a mysterious pulsing energy that made a person young again when they touched it, I revealed that I was actually 142 years old...and then pulled out

an "authentic" birth certificate to prove it.

I never lost my train of thought. And I was glad when it was over.

Oh yeah, I also walked off with the third place trophy, not too bad considering that the competition started at the area level with over 150 clubs.

What did I learn?

Wars are won one battle (speech) at a time. And it really helps to know how your mind works.

... JOHN HARRISON IS THE EDITOR OF LETTING GO.



• OUR TIME THEATER IS AN ARTISTIC HOME IN NEW YORK CITY FOR PEOPLE WHO STUTTER, PROVIDING A SAFE AND FUN ENVIRONMENT TO CREATE AND PERFORM ORIGINAL THEATER FREE OF CHARGE. THE TEEN COMPANY CONSISTS OF (left to right) DONNY SETHI, DAVID NACHMAN, YONI MESSING, COROM BUKSHA, LIDIA EROKHINA, LINDSAY CAMPBELL, AND LINDA GJONBALAJ (front). IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING ITS NEW YORK CITY PREMIERE, OUR TIME WILL PERFORM TWO ORIGINAL SHOWS AT THE NSA ANNUAL CONVENTION IN ANAHEIM.

WHAT'S HAPPENING continued

In case you missed it, University of California, Irvine psychiatrist and fellow stuttester **Dr. Gerald Maguire** was interviewed on the National Public Radio program, "All Things Considered" on April 5th. Discussion was mainly on the use of olanzapine, a medication that is believed to help with stuttering. To hear the four-minute segment that aired, please go to the following website: <www.npr.org/ramfiles/atc/20020405.atc.16.ram>.

On Tuesday, April 16th, **Bernie Weiner, Laure Porzondek** and **Jim Abbott** spoke to a class of **Dr. Alex Johnson's** Speech and Language Pathology students at Detroit's Wayne State University. This was the second year in a row that Dr. Johnson invited the group to WSU to talk about stuttering. This year they spoke for an hour to approximately 24 SLPs.

The 14th Annual National Stuttering Awareness Week was celebrated on May 13 - 19, and the Philadelphia chapter topped off the week with an SLP Doctoral Summit Meeting on May 16 - 19. Moderator **Joe Donaher, MA-CCC/SLP**, was coordinator of the stuttering program at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's Center for Childhood Communication. Seven SLP doctoral candidates who specialize in stuttering were invited from around the country, and most of them attended the local NSA chapter meeting on May 16th.

For all of you in the New England area, the **Boston** and **Boston-North chapters** are hosting their first Youth/Family day on Saturday, July

13th at the Newton-Wellesley hospital in Newton, located conveniently off of I-95 (Rt 128). If you're interested in attending, please contact **John Carter** (jcarter79@juno.com, 781-642-7576), or **Judy Butler** (jbutler@ncountry.net).

The **Royal Oak Beaumont chapter** hosted their second one-day workshop on Saturday, June 1st entitled "Successful Communication: Realistic Goals for Adults Who Stutter" - facilitated by **SLP Steve Hood** from the University of South Alabama. Among the topics addressed were behavioral and emotional dimensions of stuttering, events that effect our stuttering, and ways to talk more easily. The workshop was held at the William Beaumont Hospital Administration Building in Royal Oak, Michigan. You can get more information from **Bernie Weiner** (berniewin@aol.com) or **Jim Abbott** (jimme.jr@juno.com).



• JIM ABBOTT, BOB BIRCH AND BERNIE WEINER (SEATED LEFT TO RIGHT) MANNED A BOOTH AT THIS YEAR'S MICHIGAN SPEECH AND HEARING ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE.

And finally, congratulations to **Taro Alexander** who received the Charles Van Riper award. The award recognizes the achievements of individuals who have known the anguish of stuttering and the success of achieving effective communication and is given to those who improve the quality of life for others who stutter. Taro will also be joining us this year in Anaheim.



• TARO ALEXANDER WITH ANNIE GLENN AFTER RECEIVING THE CHARLES VAN RIPER AWARD.

A Good Day in Buffalo

A covert stutterer takes a brave step

BY MARK DEBIASIO

OVER THE WEEKEND OF APRIL 13TH, I ATTENDED A WORKSHOP HOSTED BY THE NSA BUFFALO CHAPTER AND FACILITATED BY MARY WOOD. Several who attended the workshop came from out of town. Furthest of all was a friend of mine named Ed who came all the way from St. Louis.

I found out about the NSA Buffalo chapter over two years ago at an SAT (Stuttering Association of Toronto) meeting, at which they mentioned a workshop in Buffalo. I decided to attend that workshop back in April 2000 which was facilitated by Steve Hood. I was so impressed by the experience that I decided to become a member of the NSA and attended two of their conventions.

I have to mention that I am a covert stutterer and until four years ago, kept it to myself, not speaking to anyone about it, including my family. I took therapy back then, but found that my newfound involvement in self-help groups is what really made the difference for me in breaking the limitations of my stuttering.

Attending workshops and conventions and meeting other people who stuttered is finally allowing me to slowly accept and deal with my stutter. I find myself doing some things now with

a little more ease. One in particular was after the workshop on Saturday.

You see, I have a sister living in Buffalo and I decided to invite my friends from the Royal Oak chapter, including Ed from St. Louis, to meet my sister, brother-in-law, and mother. I felt that it was time for them to meet other PWS in hopes that they could better understand it. I felt that they didn't believe that I had a problem because around them I sounded pretty fluent. I really wanted them to see that you could come across sounding fluent and still be a person who stutters.

I have to admit that I first hesitated to do this and was pretty nervous on the drive over. But things ended up going really well, and my sister and brother-in-law joined all of us for some drinks at a bar afterwards.

I would like to thank everyone who came over that night, including Ed, Jim, Bernie, Cathy, Laurie, and Julie. I feel that they really helped my family to better understand what we go through as PWS.

I still have a lot of work to do, opening up to people and advertising that I stutter. I think that my next big goal is to open up at work about it, as well as with friends.

Through a Mother's Eyes

BY MARY DEBIASIO

ON SATURDAY APRIL 13TH, I HAD THE GREAT PLEASURE OF MEETING MARK'S FRIENDS from the Royal Oak NSA Chapter and Ed Weiss from the St. Louis Chapter of the NSA.

Mark has spoken fondly of his friends whom he met through the NSA and how they support one another. I have also read the newsletter that Cathy Olish is in charge of and is doing a great job with it.

As a mother, I have felt very guilty that I had not picked up on this problem as it was never noticeable. In the meantime, Mark suffered alone during his high school and college years until four years ago when he finally broke down and talked to me about it. In turn, I encouraged him to talk to his doctor whom he had since birth and who is a very kind and understanding man who then referred Mark to Dr Kroll. Mark also went onto the Internet to find out as much as he could on this subject.

On Saturday evening, when I spoke of my guilt to Bernie, Ed and Jim, they were quick to reassure me that it was not my fault, and that I should not feel guilty. Their words were of great comfort to me, and they in turn helped me.

I was very proud of Mark that he brought his friends to my daughter's house because, for the longest time, he would not allow me to tell the family of his problem. Even though it was

the first time I had met Bernie, Ed, Jim, Cathy, Laurie and Julie, I felt their warmth and it was as if I had always known them. I am happy Mark has met this fine group of people and is receiving their support. One day I would like to attend a meeting with Mark.

In sharing our problems with others, we discover that we are not alone and derive strength from one another. The following day, my grandson Jonathan who is four and a half, told me that his uncle Mark has very nice friends.



• MARK DEBIASIO AND HIS MOTHER MARY.

SPEAKING OUT continued

tional Stuttering Association are two of my favorite nonprofit organizations. Congratulations to Stephanie for her confidence in dealing with stuttering. I'm thrilled with her success. She is a courageous young lady.

10-YEAR MEMBER SAYS THANKS

I am writing this letter to say "thank you." Being involved in the NSA for nearly 10 years has literally changed my life. Having an article published in my local newspaper on 3/11/02 about my stuttering, helped me to see how much this organization means to me. When I became a member of the NSA, I was a scared graduate student pursuing an M.A. in speech pathology. Now, I am a confident speech pathologist pursuing my life purpose of making this world a better place for all people who have communication disorders.

Through the NSA, I have had role models that have changed my life. About a month ago, I was very anxious about a presentation that I was giving in a high school about stuttering. I was anxious because I had been teased about my stuttering the last time, I went to this school. Before the presentation, I contacted Russ Hicks via e-mail. He took the time to give me the most encouraging words you could imagine. My Cleveland chapter also gave me many words of encouragement when I was feeling like I wanted to give up.

While giving this presentation, I felt an extreme amount of freedom. I felt free to be who I was. In feeling this, I was empowered and was able to be an effective speaker despite my stuttering. The NSA has helped me to come in contact with my true self and in doing this, I have discovered a rich life like I often dreamed of.

Thank you NSA for giving me the opportunity to understand that I am so much more than my stuttering and providing me with role models that have gone before and have done great things despite stuttering. I am so grateful to all the people who work so hard for the organization. A special thank you to Annie and Tammy for all their hard work at the national office.

... Marilee L. Fini



• MARILEE AND RICK FINI AT LAST YEAR'S BOSTON CONFERENCE.

OUR VOICE

NSA young people and parents speak out



Walk-a-thon for Stuttering

BY KRISTIN GRANADOS

ON APRIL 19TH, MYSELF, DEVIN JOHNSON, JOSH JAMES, BRYAN FILIPPELLI AND J.P. HORTON PARTICIPATED IN THE SECOND ANNUAL WALK-A-THON FOR STUTTERING. The walk-a-thon idea began last year, when I was brainstorming with one of my students on how to spread the word about stuttering awareness. We had already celebrated International Stuttering Awareness Day in October, but we wanted to reach more people than just those on our campus. It seems as though many of the clubs at school have fundraising events, so I thought, "Why don't we try it?"

In organizing the walk-a-thon, my fluency kids and I decided to try and accomplish several goals with the event: (1) increase awareness about stuttering throughout the district and community by passing out informative brochures and upcoming NSA events; (2) raise money for the NSA; (3) raise money for a field trip for the fluency kids to give them a chance to bond as kids, not just as "Speech Kids"; and (4) provide the kids with an opportunity to practice their speech management skills with unfamiliar listeners when asking for sponsorships and when presenting information on the walk itself.

The event started with breakfast at Summit

Intermediate, then headed to the district office, to the other intermediate school, and to five elementary schools before stopping for lunch at a local fast food restaurant and finally a walk back to Summit.

By the end of the 12-plus miles, the kids were exhausted but full of self-esteem about what they have accomplished! Last year, we raised approximately \$250, while this year we have already collected \$400. We are receiving donations from friends, families, teachers, local businesses, and anonymous donors.

The event was covered both years by the local newspaper - the *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*. It's a great event and a tradition that will hopefully last for many years to come. We have already had many teachers and students ask to participate in the next walk, so we plan to involve anyone who wants to "walk for stuttering."

... KRISTIN GRANADOS IS A FOURTH YEAR SLP FOR THE ETIWANDA SCHOOL DISTRICT IN ETIWANDA, CALIFORNIA. SHE HAS WORKED IN MANY SETTINGS INCLUDING HOSPITALS, CLINICS, AND PRIVATE SECTORS. HER PASSIONS ARE IN THE AREAS OF FLUENCY AND AUTISM, AND SHE HOPES TO BEGIN A PRIVATE PRACTICE OVER THE SUMMER.



• ON THE ROAD WITH DEVIN, JOSH, BRYAN AND J.P.

Letters

A THEORY BUSTER

As I sit here pondering why my speech has slipped lately, it finally hit me. Over the past eight months I haven't been able to go to my regular speech therapy group sessions because my school schedual has been too hectic. That coupled with my complete loss of drive (ahh to be a second year college student!), I haven't really been practicing at all.

At my prime I could completely control my speech and speaking was not only easy, it was fun. However, recently it seems to have lost some of it's appeal. I realised that the reason it has lost some of its appeal was that my instinctive fear of not being liked due to poor speech had kicked in again.

Now what was I to do? I had to know if my increased stuttering really played a part in how many new acquaintances I was making...or not making.

Upon examination I actually found that even though my speech/coherency had waived, people honestly didn't seem to care. In fact, I've had more people interested in me of late then I did before.

Well there goes that theory.

... Jay-Jones Doyle

WORKSHOPS ARE COOL

In March 2002, my family and I went to the stuttering youth day in Tacoma. I really enjoyed it because I was with other kids who stuttered, like myself.

The three of us (me and my parents) will be coming over to Anaheim, California for the annual conference this summer. I will be seeing you there!

I would like to let other kids who stutter know that they should try out a workshop. We talk about stuttering, watch films, and played outside. The kids there stutter, and are interesting to be with.

I feel opened up when we are all together.
Sincerely yours,

... Isaac Buckley

Jay Jones Doyle of Montreal sent us this poem with the following comment:

"This poem puts a lot of things in perspective about the time it takes to express myself, and the worries I have about taking up other people's time."

*I have only just a minute,
Only 60 seconds in it
Forced upon me; can't refuse it.
Didn't seek it, didn't choose it,
But it's up to me to use it
I must suffer if I lose it
Give account if I abuse it
It's only just a minute
But eternity is in it.*

... Anonymous

Dallas Chapter Celebrates 20 Years

Plaque of appreciation awarded at the celebration

BY JOSEPH DIAZ

IN 1986 THE DALLAS ASSOCIATION OF ADULT STUTTERERS BECAME THE DALLAS CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL STUTTERING PROJECT, NOW THE NSA. And at our April 30th meeting, I had the honor of facilitating our 20th anniversary celebration that was attended by a diverse crowd of 35 people who stutter, spouses, family, and speech pathologists. The event began in the Callier Center lobby where we shared appetizers and drinks, and then moved to our meeting room where everyone had an opportunity to reminisce.

What great stories we heard—from Lee Reeves, the founder of this chapter, to first time guest Weldon Torbett, who drove 50 miles to attend and who shared how he was so glad to be here. Members also remembered and shared their stories of the first time they attended a meeting or a workshop.

Speech pathologists from the Callier's Speech and Hearing Center presented us with a plaque in appreciation of our continuing support of their clinical training efforts. And Melanie McDonald

from the Texas Speech and Hearing Association offered how their SLPs would like to become closer with our group and with the NSA.

We've had a very active membership. Our members have attended numerous NSA annual conferences. And we've won countless awards, including chapter leader of the year, member of the year, chapter of the year, and parent of the year. We also hosted the NSA's 1991 national conference.

We concluded the evening by presenting Lee Reeves a plaque that read "In appreciation of your valuable leadership and continuing loyal friendship to the Dallas Chapter of the National Stuttering Association."

It's been a fantastic 20 years. We've formed lifelong friendships.

As Blas Villarreal said, "Many of us have become butterflies. We gained our courage and confidence here to fly off to become what we want to become."

... JOSEPH DIAZ IS PRESIDENT OF THE DALLAS CHAPTER.



• JOSEPH DIAZ RECEIVES A PLAQUE ON BEHALF OF THE DALLAS CHAPTER FROM JAN LOUGEAY, SLP, CCC. THE PLAQUE RECOGNIZES THE VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE NSA AND ITS MEMBERS TO THE GRADUATE PROGRAM IN SPEECH DISORDERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS. OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS MEMBERS OF THE DALLAS CHAPTER HAVE SPOKEN TO CLASSES, PARTICIPATED IN NUMEROUS PROJECTS, AND WELCOMED HUNDREDS OF GRADUATE STUDENTS IN SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY TO THEIR MONTHLY MEETINGS. STUDENTS OFTEN COMMENT THAT THEY LEARN MORE ABOUT STUTTERING FROM ONE OF OUR MEETINGS THAN COULD EVER BE LEARNED IN A CLASSROOM.

“Well, I got something out of it”

BY LEE REEVES

The birth of the Dallas chapter

IT ALL STARTED IN WASHINGTON DC IN 1967. I was a senior in high school and stuttering pretty severely. My speech therapist, Roseanne Claussen, had been working with me for a year and a half. I was her first stuttering case. She was really nice and trying very hard but we weren't making much headway.

One day she told me about a group she had heard about that was meeting at Catholic University in downtown Washington. It was a self-help group for people who stutter that had just started a couple of years before. She wondered if I might be interested in going down there. Rosanne thought that meeting some adults who stuttered might help.

Even though I was scared to death and didn't have a clue about what I getting myself into I ventured out on a dreary winter night and went to the meeting. There were about six or seven people there as I slithered into the room. They must have known right away that I stuttered because they encouraged me to come in and sit down.

I had an awful time introducing myself, but nobody interrupted or asked if I forgot my name. They all stuttered to some degree except for Eugene Wally, the SLP who helped start the group. I had never seen or heard an adult stutter before. There was an engineer, an attorney, a home-maker, and some others. They were all very nice

and encouraged me to come back. I did indeed attend several more times before I graduated and moved to Texas to start college.

My stuttering got much worse in college. Somehow I managed to get accepted to veterinary school but soon realized that I had to do something about my speech. I found a therapist whose skill matched my motivation, and I started to improve. The idea of starting a self-help group patterned after the one in Washington came to me during therapy one day. With the help of my therapist I started my first self-help group for students and people from the community. It was 1972. It was a rewarding experience and was very helpful to me personally to reach out to others. However, I was not there long enough to get the group well established, and it disbanded soon after I graduated.

Things went along pretty well for a while. I had a fairly significant relapse after graduation, moving, and starting my first job. I was able to recover pretty well but was never quite as fluent as I was at graduation. After a few years I began to gradually slip back into some of my old avoidance patterns. My stuttering began to increase, and I got really scared. I began searching for a therapist to help me out but nobody knew what to do with me. I was very knowledgeable about stuttering and was not stuttering in the interviews at all! Relapse was not part

of the professional vocabulary at the time. I was told to come back when I was stuttering more! Now I was angry but felt helpless.

In 1982, I went to hear a presentation on the neurology of stuttering by Dr. Francis Freeman, a researcher at the University of Texas Dallas Callier Center for Communication Disorders. After the presentation I approached her and explained my history and my frustration. When I mentioned the self-help group I had started in college, she became very excited and said we needed to start one in Dallas. So in April of 1982 with the help of Dr. Freeman and the assistance of a graduate student named Elwin Sims we formed the Dallas Association of Adult Stutterers.

We rocked along with 10 - 20 people at a meeting for a while. It was very exciting and just what I needed to bolster my confidence and become grounded again in who I was...a person who had lot of good qualities and happened to stutter sometimes. However, over time the group began to get smaller and smaller. One night there was just me and one other fellow, John Crady. I was depressed and felt like a failure. I asked him if we should just throw in the towel. His words have been my inspiration from that moment forward. He said in a very low and soft spoken voice, "Well, I get something out of

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

"WELL, I GOT SOMETHING OUT OF IT" continued

it." That's all I needed to hear. We have continued to meet the last Tuesday of every month for the last twenty years.

In 1986 we heard about an organization in California called the National Stuttering Project (now the National Stuttering Association). I called the executive director and liked what he had to say. The philosophy of the NSP was similar to ours, so we decided to become the Dallas Chapter of the NSP. By that time, our monthly meetings had grown to between 30 - 40 people, necessitating a format that included breaking into smaller groups so everyone had a chance to participate. We had also developed a very good relationship with the university and often had graduate students in attendance.

In 1991 we hosted the NSP Annual Convention. It was a great success and really brought our chapter closer together. Realizing that others were ready for leadership I stepped down as chapter leader around 1992 and turned it over to very capable leaders like Joseph Diaz and Russ Hicks. Through the years we have sponsored numerous workshops, youth days, and classroom presentations. We have spoken to parents, teachers, and SLP's. Our members have been featured in numerous radio, newspaper, and TV stories. Mostly, we have been there for those who needed us. I never cease to be amazed at how lives are changed by being in a supportive environment with people who understand and

encourage risk taking.

This month we will celebrate our 20th anniversary. It's hard to believe that it's been that long. There will be some who are there for the first time and some who are regulars. There will also likely be someone who shows up that we haven't seen in a long time...they just know that

it's the last Tuesday of the month, and that they're not alone!

... LEE REEVES IS A VETERINARIAN AND CURRENTLY CHAIRMAN OF THE NSA BOARD OF DIRECTORS.



• LEE REEVES AND BILL NIMELMAN COZY UP TO SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY, LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS, AND PRIVATE PRACTICE WHO ATTENDED THE CELEBRATION. (from left to right) TASHA ANDERSON, ROSSAMA PORTLEY, JAN LOUGEAY, LEE REEVES, TRICIA KRAUSS-LEHRMAN, MELANIE McDONALD, BILL NIMELMAN AND DEBRA KERNER. ALL ARE MEMBERS OF THE NSA.

Subjects Wanted for Genetic Study

The Illinois International Genetics of Stuttering Project, headed by Drs. Nancy Cox and Edwin Cook of University of Chicago, and Nicoline Ambrose and Ehud Yairi of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is making steady progress towards their goal of identifying gene(s) for stuttering. And this is, in part, due to the generous help of some NSA families.

Members of NSA will know that stuttering frequently runs in families – in fact, about 65% of people who stutter have a history of stuttering in their family. Several studies, including our own, have made it very clear that there is a genetic basis to stuttering, and that environmental situations or events experienced throughout life also may have a considerable effect. Our work has shown that in addition, there appears to be a genetic factor at work prompting either chronic (persistent) stuttering, or early natural recovery.

Our project, funded by the National Institutes of Health, is exploring genetic factors in stuttering by performing a linkage analysis, which can potentially identify the genes which underlie stuttering. To accomplish linkage analysis, a small amount of blood (2 tsp.) is drawn from each individual to be examined. This is done by professionals in medical centers. Linkage analysis identifies the forms of certain known marker genes on each chromo-

some. When individuals who stutter are found to have the same form of a marker gene (or a number of marker genes), it means that the gene contributing to stuttering may be on the same chromosome as the marker gene, in fact, very close to it. Then, that area of a chromosome can be studied in more detail to locate the particular gene, and to identify its function. In this way we can find one of the many puzzle pieces that interlock to form stuttering.

The information obtained by the study could provide an enormous step forward in the understanding of the basic nature of the disorder, and could have a profound impact on clinical practice and research. It may become possible to tailor treatment to specific genetically transmitted defects, to identify pharmaceuticals that may enhance treatment, and eventually to achieve early prediction of persistence or recovery for an individual child who begins stuttering.

Encouraging progress has been made, and some possible chromosomes have been identified. So far, more than 300 individuals from the US, Israel, and Sweden have participated in the study. But there is a great need for more data. We invite families in which more than one individual has ever stuttered, whether or not they stutter now, to participate. Family members can include grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, parents or children. For example, there may be

a family with a son and his uncle who stutter, or another family with a brother, sister, and cousin, of any age, who stutter. (But if only one parent and one child has ever stuttered, the family will not provide the information we need.) Relatives of all ages are welcome to participate. If you think that your family would be suitable for participation in the study, please contact us! After hearing from you, we will make arrangements in your geographic area to obtain the samples. Participation entails a single visit and will consume a minimal amount of time. Each individual who participates will receive a \$40 honorarium. All costs for the sampling will be covered by our project.

We sincerely hope to provide more answers for clinicians, researchers, and mostly for people who stutter. Any families who wish to participate may contact one of our team at the University of Illinois at the Illinois International Genetics of Stuttering Project, University of Illinois, Department of Speech and Hearing, 901 South Sixth Street, Champaign, IL 61820. Susan Roughton, (217) 244-2556, roughton@uiuc.edu. Dr. Nicoline Ambrose, (217) 244-2559, nambrose@uiuc.edu. Dr. Ehud Yairi, (217) 244-2547, e-@uiuc.edu. Website: <www.shs.uiuc.edu/research/stuttering>.

Your contribution to this project is greatly appreciated.

VOICE IN EXILE *continued*

gothic courtyard, my whole perception of my self began to shift. I had always seen my stuttering as this horrible and crippling handicap. Now, as I began to think of my stuttering as a challenge for change and growth from some higher or deeper source, a heaviness seemed to lift from around my heart.

Inspired by my experiences with Professor Myerhoff and my exposure to shamanism, I began to ask within for a direction or purpose. A while later, during a film project evaluation, one of my film professors said that he believed my stuttering had made me a great filmmaker. He explained that because words were so hard for me that I had found a way of speaking visually with great depth and power. Looking back at my life, I suddenly saw my creative endeavors into drawing, painting, architecture, still photography, and film as part of a great archetypal quest to communicate with others beyond the realm of the spoken word. Not long after this encounter, I received the inspiration to create a dramatic film based on my own experiences and perceptions as a stutterer. The making of this film would be a vision quest into the depths of my own psyche to uncover and share what it felt like to be a person who stutters. I sensed that the process of making this film could be healing for myself and for others, and a culmination of my creative quest to communicate.

As I began to work on the story, the idea of creating a shamanic subplot emerged. The story would be about a young stutterer who would face his fears with the help of his grandfather, a

retired anthropology professor specializing in shamanism. His journey would include the waking world, dreams, symbols, and archetypes.

One day the title for the film came to me in a dream.

After graduating from USC, I attended the American Film Institute (AFI) to continue developing my craft, and to supply a creative container for the making of this film. One day the title for the film came to me in a dream. I saw myself on a lone runway. I opened my mouth to scream, but there were steel bars in my mouth. I woke up with the title: *Voice in Exile*.

After the first year at the AFI, I returned to my childhood home in Chicago, Illinois and spent the summer writing the screenplay for *Voice in Exile*. The familiar surroundings of my childhood aided in the unearthing of the emotional and psychological memories needed for the story. This entire process felt like a dream. As I descended into the darkness of my unconscious, the world around me seemed supportive and gentle. It felt as though the world was holding its breath while I journeyed within. A black bird became the helping spirit in my story in parallel with my seeing large black crows following me wherever I would go. They seemed to be my helping spirits, both within my story and in my waking life, telling me I was on the right track.

After completing the first draft of the script I

returned to school, and began the process of making the film. I met with the Los Angeles chapter of the National Stuttering Association to deepen my research for the final draft of the script. This was my first group encounter with fellow stutterers, and as I became aware of our shared reality, I had a deep sense of tribal homecoming. After completing the final script, we began pre-production, which included casting the actors and preparing them for the shoot. This was the beginning of my quest to train an actor to stutter. At first it was merely a mechanical process, working on the physical process of stuttering. Then came the journey into the psyche of the stutterers mind, my mind. I learned so much about myself from this process that I am still in awe of it.

Weeks later we began to shoot the film but the production process was fraught with turbulence and confusion. Communication problems arose at every turn. My mind seemed to be waging a war within me — part of me wanted to share my truths, and another part of me was terrified. Everyone who worked on the film seemed to be caught in the energy of some form of communication challenge.

When principal photography was finished, I was exhausted and burnt out. I went up to San Francisco to work with my composer, and he suggested I go to Esalen Institute in Big Sur for some rest. Driving down the California coast was calming. I drove along the winding road south of Big Sur looking for Esalen, hoping that it would be before the spot where the coast road had been closed for the past year because of

storm damage. Up ahead, I saw the signs announcing that the coast road was still closed. I stopped at the roadblock, and asked a construction worker when the road would be open. He smiled and said, "Right now, you're the first to get through." He waved and the crew lifted the barrier. As I drove past the construction site I couldn't help feeling as though I were being divinely guided.

I drove for a while, and finally found Esalen. Driving down the steep incline into the property, I felt an incredible sense of belonging. Even though I had never been there before, it seemed deeply familiar, like a long lost home. I went to the office and asked if they had any vacancies. They told me that I was lucky because there was only one opening left.

After checking in, I walked around the grounds in a daze, wondering what was happening to me. I found my way to the dining room, and sat at a small table by myself, eating my food, and surveying the colorful crowd. A middle aged Native American woman approached and asked if she could join me. I said sure. She smiled warmly and sat down. Looking deeply into my eyes, she told me that she was a shaman and could tell that I had just been through a very powerful creative experience that was chaotic and painful. She continued, saying

that communication was the central theme. At this point, I could only stare in dismay. The woman proceeded to tell me that the creative endeavor was successful, despite the confusing nature of the experience. She told me I needed to replenish my energy by resting my body, following my intuition, and doing only what I felt like doing.

Later that evening I floated in the mineral baths under the stars wondering if I was dreaming and if my journey to share the inner life of a stutterer would have value. In the darkness beside me, a man and woman were having a conversation. The woman stuttered as she told the man "...if y-you c-could o-o-only kn-know how it ffeels." Tears came to my eyes as the hot water penetrated my pores and her words cut through the darkness miraculously answering my hearts question.

Feeling rested and renewed, I returned to Los Angeles and finished the film. We premiered the film, and it was a great success. Stutterers and non-stutterers said they were deeply moved. The studios called me for private screenings, power lunches, and meetings. The film won many awards, and was shown at festivals across the country. Amidst all this, I was asked to show the film and speak at a national convention for the National Stuttering Association. As I stood before the crowd of several hundred stutterers, I felt like the shaman who had gone on a vision quest, and was now bringing it back to share with the tribe. I was truly overwhelmed by the response. Stutterers, their spouses, and their families expressed their gratitude for the healing the film brought into their lives.

My vision quest was complete, yet it seemed as though my journey was just beginning. I thought I would feel whole and healed, but I felt empty and naked. All my fears were exposed to the light, the trappings of fame and fortune seemed hollow, and the person I thought I was seemed like an illusion. I left Hollywood in search of my self and to continue my quest to heal my stuttering. I traveled to distant lands, explored the rituals and practices of many spiritual traditions, and became a student of eastern and western psychology. I have lived through many crises of the heart, the mind, and the spirit, as well as many physical challenges including poor health, bankruptcy and near homelessness.

During this strange and wondrous adventure I have learned how to love and how to live more fully. With the completion of *Voice in Exile* my quest to communicate through other forms beyond the spoken word shifted to a quest to find my own voice and to help others find theirs. As I look back on my journey, I feel a deep sense of gratitude for the gift of both the blessings and challenges along the way, for they all conspired toward my growth. I have discovered that stuttering can be a call to awaken and to heal the self and others; I have discovered that for true healing to occur, we must work on all levels of ourselves—body, mind, heart and spirit—and I have discovered that the journey is all there is, and it is endless.

IT'S SHOWTIME! continued

like me won't help." But now, I want to confront and conquer the fears I have been hiding for so long and accept suggestions from people who are willing to help.

My attitude about my speech problem was reflected in my reluctance to try out for the acting program at my high school. But when I finally tried out for the play, *Little Shop of Horrors*, I was amazed. Since I'm known among my friends as a comic, I got the part of Orin, the dentist, played by Steve Martin in the movie. Well, I stole the show and had as much fun at rehearsals as I did when performing.

Amazingly, my speech impediment miraculously disappeared when I acted! I had a leading role, and I performed five shows in front of hundreds of people, making them laugh hysterically. I feel really proud of what I have accomplished. The acting experience has given me so much confidence.

Even though I cannot for the life of me give a perfectly smooth presentation to ten students in one of my classes, I can act in front of hundreds of people and not have a care in the world. I would recommend acting to anyone who doubts his or her potential to speak in public or perform, and have them see how it can change their outlook on life as a person who stutters.

Because of my experiences, I think a lot of speech related problems are psychological. I can be perfectly fluent when talking to my girlfriend on the phone or in person, but when I am placed in a situation where I think I am going to block or stutter, I go back to my old ways because I think too much about having a problem.

The main reason why I am now coming to terms with my problem is that I am going on interviews for internships at big name entertainment companies like EMI/Capitol records and Universal Music. I am seeing that if I want to succeed, I need to come to terms with my speech problem and make a healthy effort to improve my communication skills. In confronting these difficulties, I hope to achieve a level of fluency that allows me to communicate without feeling

nervous or anxious or worrying that I am going to have problems.

At the end one of my interviews, the interviewer admitted that he, too, was a stutterer. I was amazed at how well he spoke on the phone and conducted himself. It really gave me confidence to know that many great people do stutter. And it's nice to know they have managed their speech to where they can reach a high level of achievement.

I just want all the younger people to know that there is hope, and that you should follow your dreams just as I am doing. I am going to the NSA convention in Anaheim this June with my girlfriend and would like to make as many new friends as I can so we can talk about our speech issues.

I am still looking for new opportunities to improve my speech and to get new experiences at different companies doing creative internships. I have been on many interviews, but I am still looking for a summer internship. If anybody in the NSA community has any leads regarding summer internship opportunities in the entertainment industry, I would be thrilled to hear from them.

I'd also love to hear from anyone who wants to get together in the Los Angeles area. You can reach me at <Utopia000@aol.com> or on my cell phone at 609-203-7402.



• GAVIN KRIEGER AND GIRLFRIEND BARBARA DIAL.

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Chapter News

from Bonnie Weiss

BOCA RATON, FL

The Boca chapter had an interesting meeting on March 7 when they talked about relationships between 1) speech language pathologists and persons who stutter, and 2) persons who stutter and parents. Specifically, the discussion centered around what makes a good SLP, the importance to SLPs of understanding the research literature, why the stuttering clients know so much more about their disorder than other clients, and why it's still hard (even as adults) to talk to parents about stuttering. Also, the discussion led to the immense guilt a lot of parents of persons who stutter carry with them. Chapter leader Dale Williams writes that this was a meaningful meeting for all.

BOSTON, MA

Bob Rochefort tells us that members of the Boston chapter had a good time speaking to a class of speech pathology students at Northeastern University in April. Students asked questions, and the chapter members ran past their allotted time. A couple of the students talked to chapter members about clients who could benefit from joining the NSA and attending chapter meetings.

BUFFALO, NY

The Buffalo chapter got some press in the University at Buffalo's student newspaper, *The Spectrum*, recently. One of their staff writers attended a meeting and asked a lot of questions about stuttering, and about chapter member's experiences. The article made the front page of the issue, and was entitled "No Loss of Words for Stutterers." Also in April, the chapter hosted a workshop at UB's "sister" college, Buffalo State University College. Mary Wood presented a

workshop on Saturday, April 13th. We were pleased to have members from the Royal Oak, MI chapter join us. Ed Weiss of St. Louis, MO, also attended. Great workshop!

CORPUS CHRISTI, TX

The Corpus Christi chapter had two meetings in April. During the first meeting, chapter leader Peter Golleck and ASHA certified speech-language pathologist Tina Harris went to the Texas A & M of Kingsville campus to talk to the graduate class in fluency disorders. They had a wonderful discussion about feelings, as well as diagnosis and treatment of fluency disorders. At the second meeting, the topic was on "teasing." Some of the questions asked were, "Why does teasing happen?", "What are some things people tease each other about?", and "What are helpful and harmful ways to handle teasing?" These situations were then role-played by those in attendance, which included speech language pathologists, parents, and children.

SOUTHERN INDIANA

The Southern Indiana Chapter met on March 14th with four members in attendance. As the president of the chapter, Angela Hockenberry feels that things have improved a great deal from her first year as chapter leader. Dena Edwards, who is a member of Toastmasters in Corydon, Indiana, also facilitated the activity that night. She introduced table topics to the group which led to a lot of fun. Angela is interested in starting a separate group for elementary age children.

EASTERN MAINE

Marybeth Allen reports that their chapter has had a great string of spring meetings. Attendance ranged from seven to thirteen for the past three months, including some SLP grad students who are enrolled in the Fluency Disorders course at U of Maine. This spring, their core group has grown by two new members, and Marybeth has been in contact with a third potential member. Meeting topics have ranged from role playing to talking to an open Q&A session with the grad students. And in April, member Mark Biscoe attended one of the fluency classes and shared his story with the students. At the May meeting

chapter members put together a gift basket for the auction in Anaheim. At the last annual conference they won the prize for the best basket. (Okay, so it was the only one submitted.) But this year, they are ready for the challenge. Bring on the baskets!!

MANHATTAN, NY

Amy Thebodeau is the new chapter leader for the Manhattan, NY and Newark, NJ chapters. Former chapter leader, Elizabeth Mendez, writes that the chapters are "transitioning" and Amy is a dynamic woman with incredible energy. She is attending her first convention in June.

NEW CHAPTER PLANO, TX

The new Plano, TX chapter had a wonderful opportunity in May. Chris Roach, Lee Reeves, Jeff Goodman, and Bill McCullough had the privilege of airing a three-hour guest lecture program from the Dallas area. The program was part of the Distance Learning Program satellite network out of Texas Woman's University. Dr. Kathy DeKemel heads this TWU program and is a wonderful advocate and senior instructor of stuttering as well as a valuable promoter of the NSA to her students.



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