

Stroke of Luck! JoseS. story!

Before 1989, my life was eat, sleep, work, a little exercise, like playing tennis. Routine, my life was. It's April 1989, after work, little bit of supper before I went to Queen Elizabeth Park tennis court, where my tennis friends were!! It was 6:00 pm. 'Windy' and we're playing 'doubles'. Then, suddenly, I was standing there and something was wrong, I felt numb on the right side of my body.

I tried to go to the nearby bench, to sit down but I couldn't. I was standing there wondering what's happening to me. So, I laid on the ground and my friends was wondering why, also. I could still talk and told them to phone the paramedics. The paramedics came and checked me, and ambulance, with me inside, went to Emergency of Vancouver General Hospital. That's all I could remember. I woke three days after, and they did an operation (11:00pm that night!), I had a hemorrhagic stroke, an artery in my brain burst. Now, my brain circuits were in a jumble.

I waited for 2 months at VGH to go to G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Hospital, but no space for me there. The only hospital was Holy Family Hospital for geriatric patients. Old people place (I was 42 years old) but, what could I do? There I was, on manual wheelchair, cannot speak a word, the right side of my body was paralyzed. Speech therapist and occupational therapist were there to guide me to rehabilitation. I said to myself, "In six months, I will be as good as before my stroke" How wrong was I? Five months had passed, the right side of my body was still paralyzed, but I could walk, with a cane, for short distances. I went home, still speechless. It would take 3 more years, I had to relearn my speech again. Especially, English, which was my second-language. And this stage was my 'angry' and 'why me!' stage. During those 3 years, I really, could not distinguished a word to another word. But, I found out that singing (different part of the brain) I could do. So, I practiced singing karaoke songs, in a room all by myself, and tried, really, tried to get my speech going again.

By this time, I got over the 'angry', 'why me' stage and became a member of Stroke Recovery Association-BC, Templeton Branch, and went to their meetings every Thursdays morning for 4 hours! When we played Bingo, I was having a hard time distinguishing number 58 to 56. Sometimes, my brain would think, that was a number 58 and out came from my mouth saying it was number 56. So, what they did was, I would be calling the Bingo numbers from then on. At first, I know, it was hard, but little by little, I did it, called Bingo right! Before my stroke, every fourth word on my sentences was a swear word and I didn't really noticed it. But when I was relearning my speech again, I tried to reduce the swear words to zero. I try to help the new stroke survivors and volunteer at Templeton Stroke Recovery Branch newsletter. I go to the 3 SRABC-Directors Meetings/year, as the Director of our branch. There are 39 branches of Stroke Recovery Association around BC.

Now, I will go wherever the Seniors citizens goes; a bus day trip to Sunshine Coast or Victoria and on weekdays. I cannot do that if I didn't have the 'stroke.' I'll be working and don't have the time to do those things. But now, I'm semi-retired and have all the time in the world.

For my hobbies, I dabble on acrylic paintings, and call myself, freelance artist, eh! Our studio is by Skytrain's Brentwood Town Center station. On January 2004, one of my paintings, "Community of Abodes," was bought by United Way. The Scotiabank and United Way Community Spirit Awards recipients got a print of "Community of Abodes." The painting is a vibrant depiction of a typical neighborhood that could be found anywhere in the Lower Mainland- a neighborhood of diversity. I really didn't expected it. Going to that early morning event at Grand Ballroom, Westin Bayshore and sat at the VIP table. Pamela Martin (CTV New at 6 anchor) was the emcee. I watched everything in awe. This was happening so fast for me!!! It was a blurr!!

You can see me going to our art studio; with my trusty sidekick (an electric scooter and no name yet), via Skytrain-Millennium Line, in rain or in sunshine!

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--by Jose Suganob



To pass time, I paint with acrylics at AHA (Artists Helping Artists) studio And passes as a freelance artist, eh!



One of the SRABC Directors Meeting in Naramata Center, Naramata, BC, It is 17 km. north of Penticton, BC, on the shores of Okanagan Lake.



My 'Blue Door' painting, 3 panel, 5'x6', Acrylic. Private collection somewhere in Lower Mainland



This is my trusty sidekick Everywhere I go, he'll come along!