

BRAIN INJURY

Summer 2023

# HOPE

## MAGAZINE

SERVING ALL AFFECTED BY BRAIN INJURY

**Your Voice in the  
Brain Injury Community**



[WWW.BRAININJURYHOPE.COM](http://WWW.BRAININJURYHOPE.COM)

# Welcome

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## Publisher's Introduction

### HOPE MAGAZINE

*The Voice of the  
Brain Injury  
Community*

Summer 2023

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#### **Publisher**

David A. Grant

#### **Editor**

Sarah Grant

#### **Our Contributors**

Martha Bonnie  
Patrick Brigham  
Sarah Grant  
Tiffany Gross  
Carmen Kumm  
Teresa Peters  
Lora Reynolds  
Rebecca Veenstra  
Donavan Vliet  
Lisa Yee

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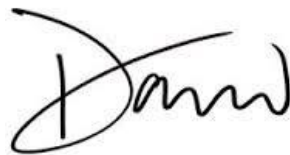
### **Introducing the HOPE Magazine's Summer 2023 Edition**

I'm thrilled to present to you the Summer 2023 Edition of HOPE Magazine - a beacon of courage, resilience, and inspiration for the brain injury community. Each page of this issue has been thoughtfully curated to bring you stories that represent the powerful spirit of our vibrant community. We are especially pleased to have a special section: Survivor Poetry, which includes current and prior poetry submissions.

Our commitment to fostering an empowered community is reflected in each article, narrative, and shared experience. As always, our pages are filled with hope, love, strength, and the undeniable resilience of the human spirit.

Remember, we are a community connected not just by shared experiences, but by HOPE. Thank you for being a part of this journey, and here's to a summer filled with strength, growth, and unwavering resilience.

I wish you peace on your journey.



David A. Grant  
*Publisher*

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*"Where there is no vision, there is no hope."*

-George Washington Carver

Summer 2023



*Advocacy*

*Education*

*Inspiration*



A close-up photograph of various keys and beaded necklaces resting on a light-colored wooden surface. In the foreground, a silver key with a textured head and the word 'SENTRY' embossed on it is prominent. To its left, a dark wooden keychain with several black beads is visible. In the background, a necklace with colorful beads (yellow, green, pink) and a red wooden bead with white polka dots are seen. Another necklace with a white wooden bead and blue polka dots is also visible. The lighting is warm and natural, highlighting the textures of the wood and the different materials of the jewelry.

**Again With  
the Keys**

**Lisa Yee**

Have you ever misplaced something—something like, say, your keys—and then had to retrace your steps? Sure, you have. Everyone does that. No need to use brain injury as an excuse.

A few evenings ago, I had taken my keys with me when my husband and I went out. I didn't give those keys a thought until the next morning when I was in my usual rush to an appointment. (You didn't ask, but that appointment was a dance class at the Y. What I lack in grace, I make up for in enthusiasm.)

I used a spare key to lock up, putting off the search until later.

Much later, well after Second Breakfast, tidying up, and Spanish lessons on Duolingo, I checked the usual places where stuff turns up—counters, bathrooms, etc.

Then I panicked. Surely the keys had fallen during last night's group run. ... No, wait: Maybe they were still in my running belt, which I had tossed into the laundry. But no. So, the retracing began. This took the form of a slow jog, easy on the body but tough on the mind.

I kept looking down, reminding myself to check park benches and the bases of lampposts, where people often place objects they find along the path.

When my running watch pinged, telling me I had gone 1 mile from where the GPS function had kicked in, I knew I was about to reach my turnaround point from the night before, so I trotted on.

Then my brain pinged. I stopped running and started laughing at myself.

Along with the familiar view of Chicago, I recalled the sensation of having my jacket tied around my waist and the feeling of annoyance at having to readjust it as something kept whacking me in the gut.

My keys! I now saw myself zipping them into the pocket—the pocket of last night's jacket, now sitting in the dryer. Sure enough, that's exactly where I found them.

After a leisurely walk home.

## Meet Lisa Yee

*Lisa, who lives in suburban Chicago, suffered a traumatic brain injury and acquired epilepsy in a car accident in 2008. For the previous two decades, she had worked in newspaper editing in Florida, North Carolina, and Illinois. She and her husband, Ted, have a daughter named Megan, who lives in Chicago. After the TBI, Lisa became certified as a yoga instructor and now volunteers to teach yoga at a women's shelter and a veteran's center.*



# RESEARCH PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITY

## What is the goal of the study?

To understand the daily challenges that older adults experience due to a cognitive impairment. We also hope to learn what strategies work, identify needed areas of support, and characterize current use of technology.



## What does participation involve?

The study is completed remotely over Zoom and involves an interview and completing questionnaires and tasks.

## Who is eligible?

- ✓ 60 years or older
- ✓ History of brain injury with persistent cognitive difficulties OR those experiencing recent changes in thinking and memory

## Interested in participating? Please contact us:

Phone 217-265-0885  
Email [kch-hfa-enact@illinois.edu](mailto:kch-hfa-enact@illinois.edu)

OR sign up here:

<https://redcap.link/enhance>

**There is financial compensation for participation**

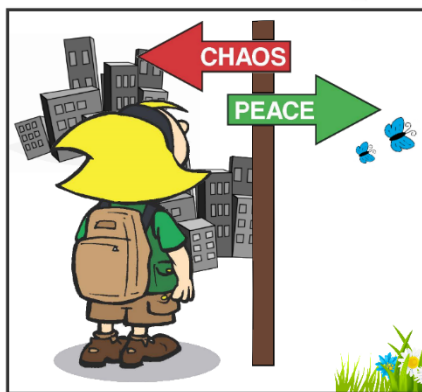


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University of Illinois IRB #20993

## Living With Hope

By Patrick Brigham





# My Life After Brain Injury

**Carmen Kumm**

On July 19, 2010, I experienced a harrowing car accident that nearly took my life. Miraculously, my two young boys, aged 5 and 6 at the time, emerged from the incident unscathed. It was a long road to recovery for me, and I finally left the hospital on October 8. Determined to reclaim my normalcy, I devoted myself to getting back to my job as a high school Spanish teacher. Initially, I resumed teaching part-time in January 2011, gradually working my way up to full-time over the next two school years.

However, my journey hit another setback when I faced disciplinary action for an unfortunate incident involving a student. Recognizing the severity of the situation, I chose to resign before facing termination. The weight of the experience consumed me, and I found myself sleeping for an entire week, unable to escape the emotional toll.

In the midst of this struggle, I stumbled upon a book that would change my life forever: "Rebooting My Brain" by Maria Ross. This transformative read granted me the invaluable permission to grieve the loss of my former self and simultaneously celebrate the emergence of my new life. It was a pivotal moment.

By a stroke of luck, I came across a new job opportunity with the local post office, which offered me part-time hours. This arrangement provided the necessary breathing space for everyday activities without overwhelming stress. Wednesdays became my sacred "nap day," where I intentionally avoided scheduling any commitments. This dedicated time for rest and rejuvenation became crucial to my well-being.

Over time, I have come to embrace living with my brain injury. I acknowledge that I can never fully return to who I once was or accomplish everything I once could. Now that my four children have all grown into adults, with my youngest recently graduating high school, my life has taken on new dynamics. We even had the pleasure of hosting a student from Norway, enriching our family's experience.

Traveling, however, remains a challenge for me. I thrive best within the comforting embrace of routine. While my husband frequently travels to Florida or Texas to visit our children in the military, I have only made the journey once. Nonetheless, I have an upcoming adventure planned—a ten-day trip to Norway in August with my mom. I have thoughtfully organized the itinerary to allow myself four recovery days before attempting to return to work. This time away will be an opportunity for me to fully immerse myself in the experience and reaffirm that I refuse to let my traumatic brain injury define me; rather, I define my relationship with it.

**Wednesdays became my sacred "nap day," where I intentionally avoided scheduling any commitments. This dedicated time for rest and rejuvenation became crucial to my well-being.**



One of the remarkable aspects of my journey is that most people who don't know me remain blissfully unaware of the fatigue and brain fog I constantly grapple with. I have intentionally kept it hidden from the outside world, and it brings me a sense of satisfaction to preserve that semblance of normalcy.

Life has taken me on an unexpected and challenging path, but I continue to navigate it with resilience, grace, and steadfast determination to live life on my own terms, regardless of the limitations imposed by my TBI.

## Meet Carmen Kumm



*Carmen Kumm, aged almost 54, is a survivor of a traumatic brain injury (TBI) resulting from a car accident on July 19, 2010. She had been a Spanish teacher at the local high school in Pittsville, Wisconsin, for 21 years. Carmen is a proud mother of two daughters and two sons. She and her husband have been together for over 30 years, creating a strong and enduring partnership. Although she hasn't become a grandmother yet, Carmen remains hopeful for the future.*

**HELP KEEP ATHLETES SAFE *from* CONCUSSIONS**  
**AND OTHER SERIOUS BRAIN INJURIES**

- REPORT IT**  
Remind your athletes to tell coaching staff right away if they think they have a concussion or that a teammate has a concussion.
- FOLLOW THE RULES**  
Make sure that athletes follow the rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- SPORTSMANSHIP**  
Encourage athletes to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- ACTION PLAN**  
Keep the Heads Up Action Plan at all games and practices.

**LEARN more AT:**  
[www.cdc.gov/Concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion)



# The Paradox of Silence

## If I Remain Silent

If I remain silent, my words will not betray me.  
If I remain silent, my confusion remains within.  
If I remain silent, I won't say something that I regret (again).  
If I remain silent, no one can see that I am disabled.  
If I remain silent, no one can hear my Soul cry.  
If I remain silent, I can walk among the 'uninjured' without drawing attention.  
If I remain silent, those who knew me 'before' will see no change.  
If I remain silent, I will dwell alone in isolation.  
If I remain silent, no one will ever know.  
If I remain silent, those who can help me never hear my cries.  
If I remain silent, I shut myself off from the love and help of others.  
I am destined to never move forward...

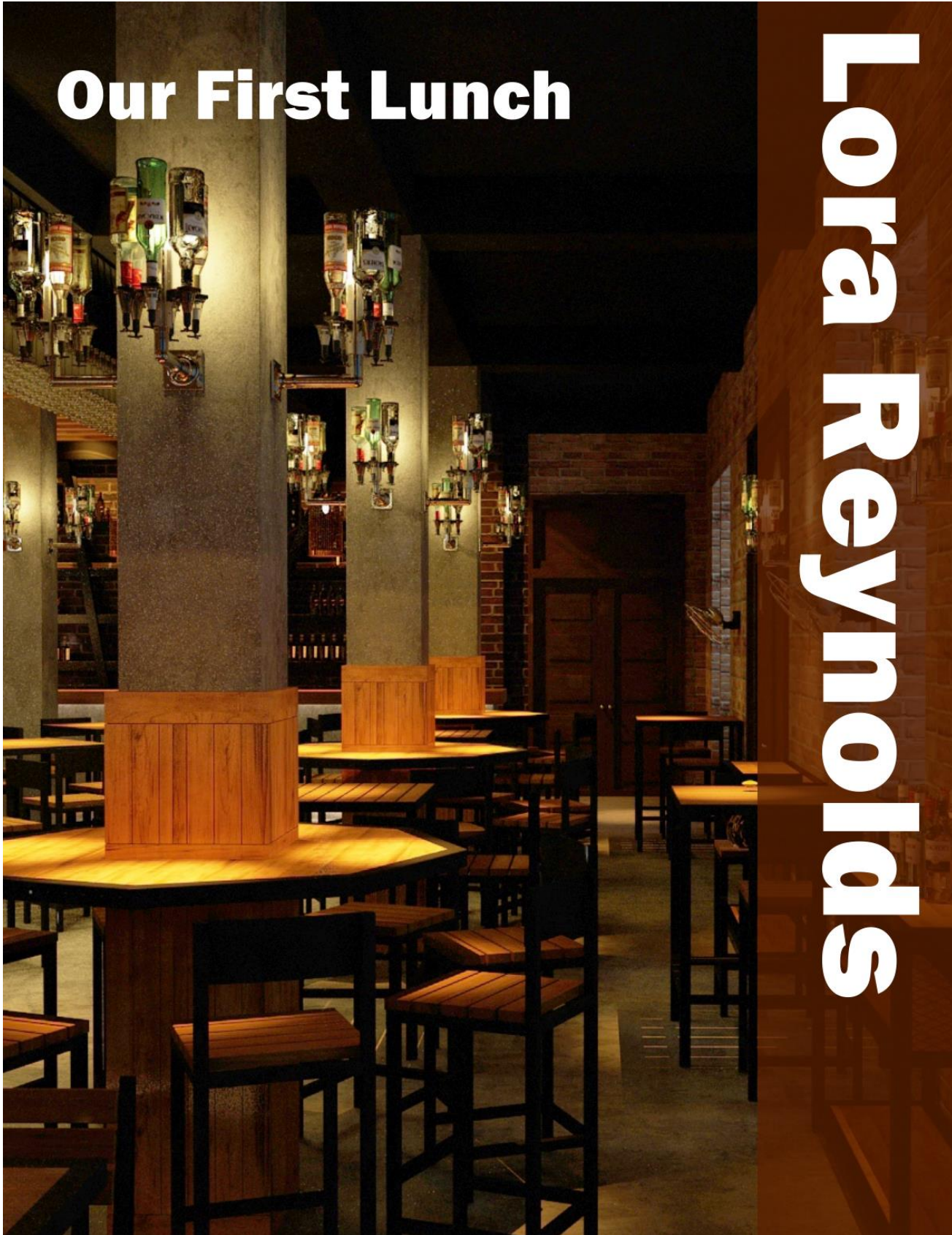
## If I Remain Silent

***Your story has value. Kindly consider  
submitting your story for publication.***

Brain Injury  
**HOPE**  
Supporting Each Other

# Our First Lunch

# Lora Reynolds



After several years and changes in life's circumstances, I moved back to my hometown. It was then that I met my friend for lunch.

Thanks to the modern wonders of technology and an article in the local paper, I was able to reach out and find him again. We had several online chats and rescheduled our lunch a couple of times, but finally, the day came when we could meet up.

We were friends in college, and even though it has been some years, I still hold memories and moments attached to him, as well as things I had planned to bring up and reminisce about.

We had been friends on Facebook for years, and I had heard through online discussions (let's be real -- the gossip and grapevine) about an accident he had been in and how he got hurt. However, I only had secondhand information and wasn't brave enough, or maybe I felt it would be foolish, to bring up the subject that day and get the real, firsthand story.

We chatted online as if we were old friends because, in fact, we were. We had plenty of other things to talk about, and I had been eagerly looking forward to seeing my long-lost pal all week.

I arrived at the restaurant a bit late but seeing him was amazing! He looked great and was just as handsome as I had remembered. That unforgettable smile was there, and it felt like it was just for me. I apologized for being late and felt quite embarrassed. "No worries," he reassured me. "I haven't been here long, only about forty-five minutes."

We laughed and I took my seat. We got comfortable and re-acquainted with each other before the waitress arrived. More apologies followed, along with the usual pleasantries like "How was your drive?" and "Look at this weather." It felt so good to finally see each other after all those years, and having a friendly face in front of me was a comforting experience. We placed our orders and caught up over our meals when they arrived. Everything was going so well.

As we finished up, I felt a twinge of sadness. Here I was, having lunch with an old crush of mine, and things were going swimmingly. I didn't want it to end, but I knew it had to. The check came, and our lunch was winding down. I looked across at him and noticed a strange look on his face. I asked if something was wrong.

I saw the struggle for words on his face, and immediately panic ran through me. "Oh no, did I say something stupid? Do I have food in my teeth? Oh God?" So many thoughts raced through my head. He stared at me for a moment, looked down, and then back up again. "I don't remember you," he

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finally confessed. "I have been struggling to tell you that, and I hope it doesn't hurt your feelings. It's not your fault. I was hoping that seeing you would trigger something, but it hasn't. I'm sorry, I don't remember anything, but please know that I have enjoyed our lunch, and I feel quite comfortable. This has been fun, but I don't remember you from before at all."

How was I supposed to take that? I thought I was awesome, fun, and amazing (and I still believe that). How could anyone forget all of that? I felt offended for about ten seconds, but then understanding and compassion kicked in. I laughed and said, "It's okay. Now we get to become friends all over again. No worries!" And I truly meant it.

Here was this person in front of me, struggling with a very real problem and exposing a vulnerable and complicated truth. He had suffered a brain injury that affected him in ways I could never imagine. I knew this about him going into our meeting—it wasn't a secret, and it didn't matter to me. However, I couldn't help but wonder how many times he had been through similar conversations before. How many other people might have reacted with anger or hurt, causing him to be dismissed and overlooked?

**“Here was this person in front of me, struggling with a very real problem and exposing a vulnerable and complicated truth. He had suffered a brain injury that affected him in ways I could never imagine. I knew this about him going into our meeting—it wasn't a secret, and it didn't matter to me.”**

That look of fear on his face earlier—it carried a touch of apprehension. Perhaps it was the fear of rejection, the fear of appearing foolish, or the fear that my brief offense could turn into a judgmental "what's wrong with you?" response. I had a choice to make. I could have reacted with confusion or annoyance, or I could genuinely and wholeheartedly accept the situation. After all, there were plenty of things from college that I couldn't remember, and I had no excuse for that either! So, I chose to reassure him that it was okay, and I truly meant it.

It was undoubtedly a strange experience, I won't deny that, but I found comfort in the fact that we could have a fresh start. We had the opportunity to get to know each other all over again. I looked forward to it with genuine anticipation. I believe my comments brought a sense of relief to him—a sense of "whew!" and "thank goodness!" I was glad to have given him that peace of mind.

We made plans to keep in touch and arrange another lunch or a similar activity in the near future. I knew that if we were to develop a friendship, I needed to educate myself about brain injuries because, truthfully, I knew nothing about them. But seeing that smile from earlier made all the effort worthwhile. After that first day, that first lunch, I knew there was something special about this man.

What I could remember about him was that he was cute, a true gentleman who had made me smile and laugh on numerous occasions. What he could remember of me didn't matter. All I knew was that our conversations flowed easily and were filled with joy, and I couldn't wait to see him again. That lunch became the starting point of an interesting, wonderful, and sometimes challenging relationship so far—a journey that I am excited to continue.

If I had simply blown him off that day, never given him the chance to share his stories and help me understand where he is now compared to where he had been, what kind of person would that have made me? The answer is simple—a jerk. I realized that it's crucial never to give anyone that dismissive "look" or make them feel inferior. If I had, I would have never known the person I love today or become the person I have evolved into. Everyone deserves compassion and understanding.

I learned the power of empathy and the importance of embracing someone's struggles without judgment. Our lunch encounter became a turning point in my perspective on relationships and human connection. It reminded me of the incredible resilience and strength of the human spirit, even in the face of adversity.

From that day forward, I embarked on a journey of rediscovery, both of my friend and myself. Together, we navigated the complexities of his brain injury, growing closer and forging a bond built on understanding, acceptance, and unwavering support.

I am grateful for that lunch, for the opportunity to experience a fresh start, and for the profound lessons it taught me. It's a constant reminder that life's unexpected turns can lead to remarkable connections and beautiful transformations.

## Meet Lora Reynolds



*Lora Reynolds, an aspiring writer from West Virginia, is currently working as a grant writer for a small non-profit organization based in Lewisburg. With a passion for writing, Lora enjoys exploring various topics through her writing and expressing her creativity. Outside of work, she finds solace in the outdoors, cherishes time spent with loved ones, and shares a special bond with her cat, Mika. With her passion for writing and her commitment to making a difference, Lora aspires to use her skills to raise awareness, provide support, and contribute to the betterment of the brain injury community.*

## Join our Facebook Family

What do almost 30,000 people from 60 countries and five continents all have in common? They are all members of our vibrant Facebook family at [f/TBIHopeandInspiration](https://www.facebook.com/TBIHopeandInspiration)





# The Benefits of Advocacy

# Sarah Grant

I know firsthand the challenges of being a caregiver to a loved one with a traumatic brain injury (TBI). My husband was hit by a car while riding his bicycle in 2010. Along with his TBI, he has PTSD, which rears its head in the form of nightmares.

Today, he has recovered physically and works to recover from his TBI challenges every day. We are cautious about what we expose ourselves to, like scary movies, snakes, and heated political conversations. He meditates daily, takes time to rest when he needs it, and sometimes takes a simple walk to our garden which can clear his head and make him better able to face his day.

When the accident happened, our lives changed instantly. I was trying so hard to keep all the balls in the air – work, home, kids, bills – that I didn't think about anyone else. I isolated socially and lost many friendships.

At a support group, I started talking with other caregivers about what was happening. It was easier to navigate the challenges, knowing how other people handled them and having someone – a peer – help guide me through the hard stuff.

Somewhere along the way, we both realized that we needed to advocate for ourselves. Speaking up for yourself can help you **feel empowered and in control**. When you advocate for yourself or your loved one, you take charge of your situation and demand the services and support you need, which can be very empowering.

Second, advocacy can help you connect with other survivors and caregivers. When you share your experiences with others, you can **learn from each other and build a strong support network**. This can be invaluable, especially when you are feeling isolated or overwhelmed. My husband volunteers at a local rehabilitation hospital, as a mentor. When newly diagnosed survivors are being treated long-term, they have lots of questions, and some want to talk with a peer who has found a way to overcome some of the challenges.

Third, advocacy can help you raise awareness about TBI and its impact. When you speak out about TBI, you help educate the public about the issues, leading to **better understanding and support** for TBI survivors and caregivers. Go to a support group and talk about what's helped you - it may help someone else!

**At a support group, I started talking with other caregivers about what was happening. It was easier to navigate the challenges, knowing how other people handled them and having someone – a peer – help guide me through the hard stuff.**



Since his accident, we have heard about and met people going through TBI struggles. I wonder if we gravitate toward them or if they gravitate toward us. Still, we can use our experiences to help them through their journeys, and they unknowingly help us.

Finally, advocacy can help you make a difference in the lives of others. Here are some ways to help other survivors and caregivers that we've tried:

- Volunteer for a TBI organization. Your local rehab may have a mentor or outreach program, to help those who are just starting on the path that you're moving beyond.
- Share your story. Write a blog post or attend a support group, either online or in person! Support groups are safe places to discuss what's happening and to help understand why. We've learned many compensatory strategies from other survivors.
- Get involved in research. Many universities have ongoing research studies for brain injury survivors and caregivers, and they offer compensation for your story and time. (I did one earlier this year for Cornell and received a \$60 Target gift card for participating!)

No matter how you choose to advocate, you can make a difference. It's hard to reach out to others when you're struggling with your own stuff. I know – I get it. But if you share your experiences to help other people, you're also helping yourself.

We are all in this together. Together, we can make a difference.

## Meet Sarah Grant



Sarah lives in Salem, NH, with her husband and three cats. She is an advocate for caregivers within the brain injury community and co-facilitates a monthly online caregiver support group. Sarah can usually be found spending time with her family or outdoors, enjoying life with her husband, David.

**"Every day is an opportunity to embrace the gift of life and make a positive impact in the world around us."**

- Sarah Johnson



# Getting Through a Day

# Teresa Peters

Recently, (a relative term meaning any time in past year or so), I saw a news clip about Spencer Beach from Edmonton, Alberta (Canada) on CTV News. During the news report, I remembered that I met this man.

Spencer Beach spoke at a Toastmasters' group I used to belong to, prior to my accident in 2009. He is truly inspiring. After experiencing a horrific workplace accident that caused burns to 90% of his body and surviving, coupled with all the ambiguous loss that resulted from that tragic event, Spencer eventually went on to become an advocate for workplace safety and a much sought-after public speaker.

It took me several years after my motor vehicle accident to even remember that I had belonged to Toastmasters. It is an organization where club members have the opportunity to improve their speaking skills and learn from other experienced public speakers. Though I have had some slow gains in recovery over these nearly 14 years, you would never know listening to me that I used to be part of a public speaking group. In fact, on a very bad or very tiring day, you would wonder if I knew high school English.

I don't know if Spencer's accident caused a brain injury, but I'm assuming it did not. Because he had a nearly immediate understanding of how his life had changed. As a result of my injuries suffered in the accident, I did not have immediate understanding. It was many years afterward until I started to even just begin to understand how my life was different and would not ever be the same; that I would not be able to work, or even be of use.

In the news clip, Spencer Beach says,

*"I live my life ... if at the end of the day, my family is happy, healthy, and safe, I had a pretty good day."*

My days are never that. Following my accident, I could not make my family or employer happy, and I did not know why. I lost my job, lost my friends, lost my house, lost contact with family, and eventually divorced. Fast forward to now, and I am still unable to give my son hope that days ahead will be better and that I'll be safe on my own. In fact, my own sister most often appears sad at the end of any time spent with me. Some days I am much more down on myself than I should be. My son

**"As a result of my injuries suffered in the accident, I did not have immediate understanding. It was many years afterward until I started to even just begin to understand how my life was different and would not ever be the same; that I would not be able to work, or even be of use."**

and my sister, try to remind me of the progress that I have made to this point, but it wears them down having to make sure I don't give up hope.

Being in the accident cost me everything. And though I expect others had a range of tragedies and loss from the chaotic multi-vehicle accident of 2009, I do wonder why I'm alive; yet I am thankful to be alive all the same.

I hope one day before I die, that I can focus on something else in a day besides waiting for my case to be settled and trying to figure out how to get through a day. Though I'm legally not allowed to speak of my accident, since the matter is not resolved yet, I am usually required at least once a year or more, to relive every detail of it. I'd rather this went away so I can move on from having to relive these painful moments so often. Sometimes I can't decide which is more painful, to have to relive the accident or to be questioned about details of my life that I have no memory of.

No amount of money can ever give me back what I lost; all that I had worked so hard for. I cannot get back that time, the relationships, the independence, my abilities and experience, my health, or even all my memories. I frequently feel I have no purpose in life



as I am not contributing and productive in any useful way.

I pray for the ability to use any of the few “ok” days I might have remaining, to see the people I care about – those who have stuck with me – truly smile and be happy.

Though I have more okay days than I used to, so many of my days are not okay. Often my days are unfocused, painful, or just a loss. Even a “good” day, where I try to do “normal” things can end badly; due to being easily overwhelmed and cognitively fatigued. Fatigue, cognitive impairment, communication issues, balance and mobility concerns, slow information processing, difficulty with memory and organizing, are just some of my daily battles. This is more noticeable to onlookers when I have to do something beyond just making sure to feed my dog. It makes maintaining healthy friendships difficult; and can cause tremendous embarrassment, even during small interactions like checking out with the cashier at the grocery store.

Everyone I know works at least one job or has at least some area of responsibility every day. Still not having a daily routine has been one of my biggest complaints as far back as I can remember, following my accident. Not only does society place tremendous emphasis on what a person does, rather than who they are, so does the legal system. It is all very frustrating.

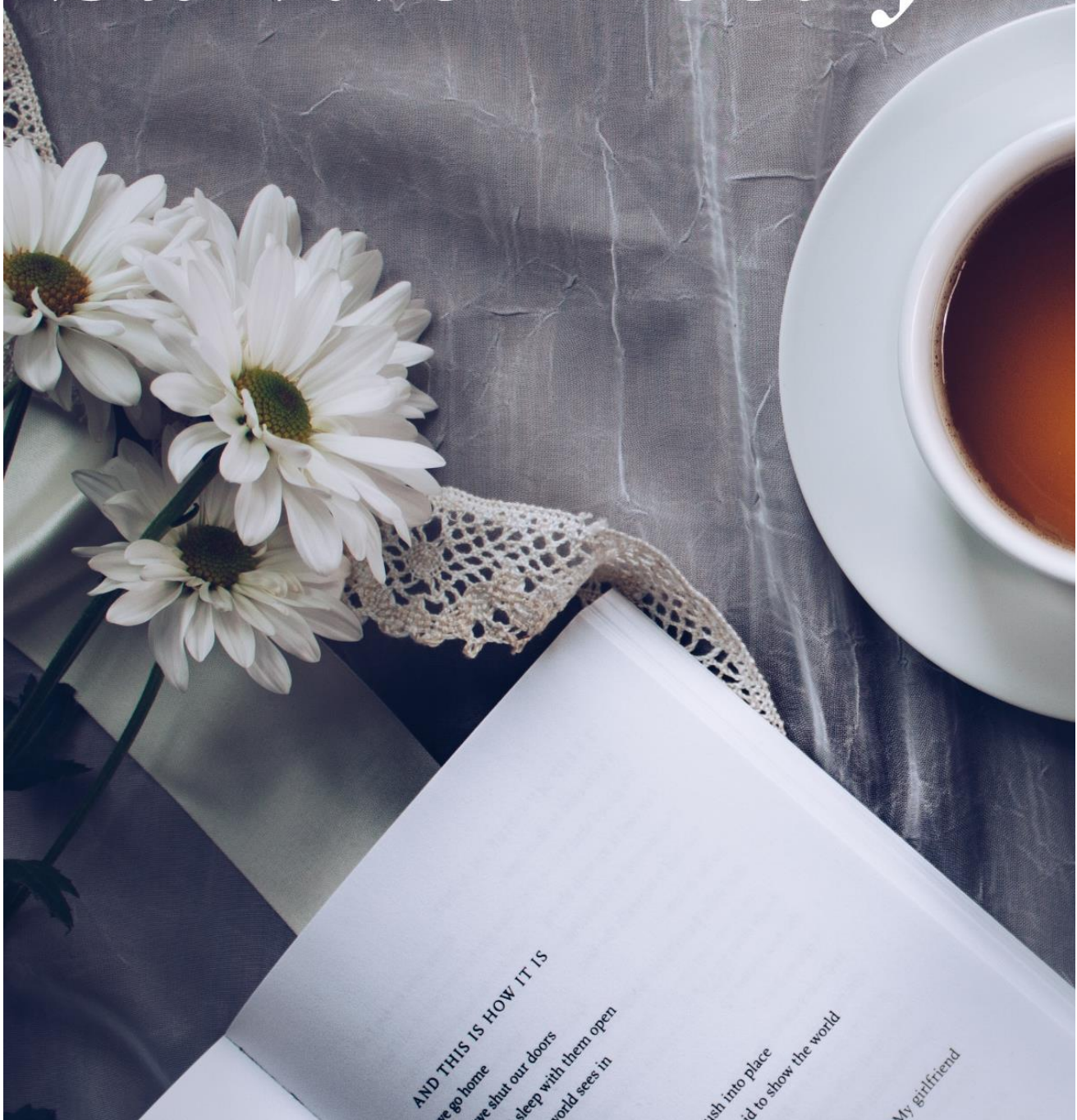
It’s not my intention to repeat myself, but often I find getting through a day is hard. I wonder if my family will ever be happy. Will I ever be able to provide them with the hope that I’ll be okay and manage relatively well on my own. When will I be able to look back and say, like Spencer did, that I had a pretty good day?

## Meet Teresa Peters



*My name is Teresa Peters. I’m a TBI Survivor in my late 50’s. Before my accident of 2009, I had earned a bachelor’s degree in information systems. I worked as an IT Business Process Analyst for a department within a Municipal Government. I was also a mother, wife, step-mother, and Christian Youth Ministry organizer. In my spare time I worked as an IT Consultant, designing websites and creating small software applications. I maintained the family home, handled the finances for both my business and my husband’s, cooked, cleaned, hosted events, looked after my step-grandchildren, traveled, was physically active, involved at church, and taking dance lessons with my husband. Currently I am divorced, and living with my son has graciously agreed to share rental housing costs and monthly expenses with me. He has also been pivotal in re-training me in activities of daily living, such as cooking and driving.*

**Special Section**  
*Survivor Poetry*



# Your Words or Mine

By Martha Bonnie

I can hear you  
Every word you speak  
Each one drifting past  
Like a bubble blown from a wand  
Will my ear catch this one  
Or will it pop  
Leaving shards of letters  
Scattered for another conversation

You talk at the same time  
And sing along to music  
Birds croaking the backup chorus  
Footsteps pounding out the bass  
My ears catch your chatter  
But I don't hear any words

You're speaking to me now  
Lips moving  
Mouth preparing to launch  
Muddied sounds and  
Distorted tones. I am listening  
I hear your beautiful voice  
*Can you repeat that, please?*  
*Do I want a rake?*  
*A piece of cake?*  
*Oh, yes.*  
*I do love to bake.*

You ask another question  
I slowly release the air  
Even as I know I'm  
Deflating, Deflated, Defeated

The thousands of words  
Of my childhood  
And adolescence  
All I learned earning  
My first bachelor's degree  
And my second  
Topped with a master's degree  
Every cherished word  
Swirls through the synapses  
Of my sticky tricky stuck brain

But not one  
Divine difficult or delicate  
Word spills out  
Of my highly educated  
Yet sluggishly processing mind  
Before  
You blurt out  
An answer for me  
Using a word  
I would never choose



*Originally from Green Bay, Wisconsin, Martha and her family relocated to Arizona in the fall of 2021 after Martha sustained a traumatic brain injury. Arizona is famous for its blue skies and sunshine, and the climate has been great for healing her body and soul. Before her injury, Martha was a teacher, working in literacy with students and teachers at all grade levels. She loved her job as an educator, but her favorite role has always been as a mother to her own two children. Martha writes poetry and narrative nonfiction that includes her experiences since her brain injury as well as finding beauty in the natural world. While speaking aloud doesn't always come easy to Martha, the words flow onto the page for her, letting her express her emotions and experiences. Martha is grateful for her continued ability to write, a passion since childhood.*

# Grasp The Life Ring

By Donovan Vliet

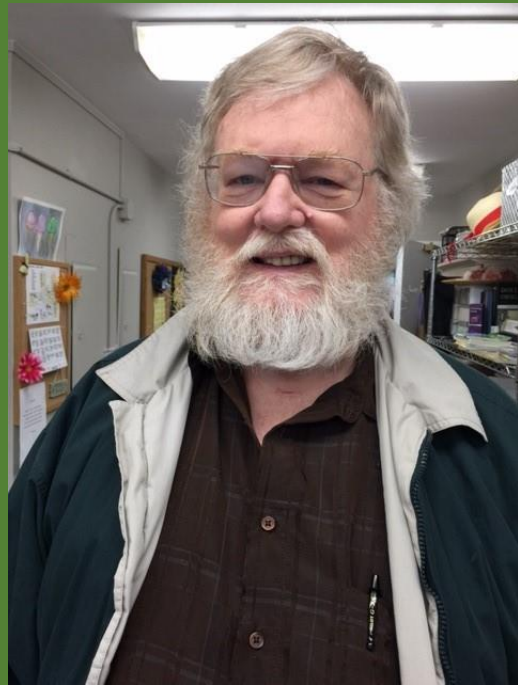
In a moment's notice  
Traumatic brain injury strikes  
It catches you when you are least aware  
It arrives unannounced  
Scrambling your mind.

Putting the pieces back together  
Is like creating a puzzle  
It takes time to recreate the image  
It may seem you are normal  
Nonetheless the hidden disabilities are real.

You may feel unqualified to respond  
Yet the new you gives you strength  
The urge to move forward  
There is no going back to the former self  
Wishing the life-changing event never occurred  
Doesn't change the outcome of the jolting incident.

As the fog clears you seek to recover  
The new life may be better than the former  
Still it can be a struggle  
Living up to your potential is practical  
There is no correct path in life.

We all lose our way sometimes  
Life is what you make of it  
Traumatic brain injury need not hold you back  
Grasp the life rings others toss you  
The journey need not be taken in despair  
I'm here to give you care.



*Donovan Vliet is a multi-decade survivor of an automobile accident. He went headfirst through a car windshield in 1969 and sustained a severe traumatic brain injury. Since then, he has been recovering and is now thriving. In the last fifty years, he has written over a thousand poems and numerous essays. He has written a book titled "Thriving After a Very Severe Traumatic Brain Injury."*



# Introductions

By Rebecca Veenstra

My new self?  
I'm confused.  
My new self?  
Whatever for?

The old one was fine  
Far as I could tell  
Probably coulda used  
some tinkering in truth

But it was still going down the road just fine  
What do they say?  
If it ain't broke don't fix it?

Now that it's broken tho?  
All Humpty Dumpty style

Swallowed by quicksand in the road  
Where they found me  
Irretrievably lost  
Like it was never there  
An entire self...gone  
Just like that

It must be replaced with something no?  
My new self...of course...this makes some sense  
now.  
Reluctantly...I ask for the mantle...I'll wear it, yes...

Oh? I am wearing it?  
What d'ya know...

I have been? For how long??  
Since they found me? You don't say...

Awkward...ok...um. Well if ya don't mind making  
introductions

I'm afraid we are not acquainted

This self and I are perfect strangers,  
Though we have been tethered

Since I woke up in the road that was like quicksand  
swallowing the thing that I called my life.



*Rebecca writes...*

*"I was an herbalist, runner, work out fanatic, health food nut and writer before a run in with a dump truck in 2014 changed my life forever. I live in Northern Michigan with my two Chihuahuas.*

*I enjoy gardening and photography. This is my first piece of writing since the crash. It feels good to have my words back again. I am beginning to think of ways I can pay back all the kindness and caring I received through my recovery. I hope to someday find a path that gives me the opportunity to advocate for and support others with TBI and PTSD."*

# What is TBI?

By Tiffany Gross

TBI.

What is it?

Well, I know what it is not. It is not you.  
It should not be who you are. It does not  
define you.

It should only be a part of you.

You are not TBI.

You have a TBI.

It is not you.

You are not it.

You have a name, and it is not TBI.  
You have a personality separate from this  
disability.

You are who you are because of you.  
Not because of your TBI.

When you introduce yourself you do not say,  
“Hi, my name is TBI.”

If you do, stop it!  
You come first, you hear me?



*Tiffany wrote this poem with her  
friend Marvin. She writes...*

*“Marvin Tibbs and I have been writing poetry  
together over the years. His car accident  
happened in October of 2014. We have been  
working together and trying to enjoy  
ourselves as much as we can while on this TBI  
journey. We both have found that writing has  
been helpful in the healing process.”*

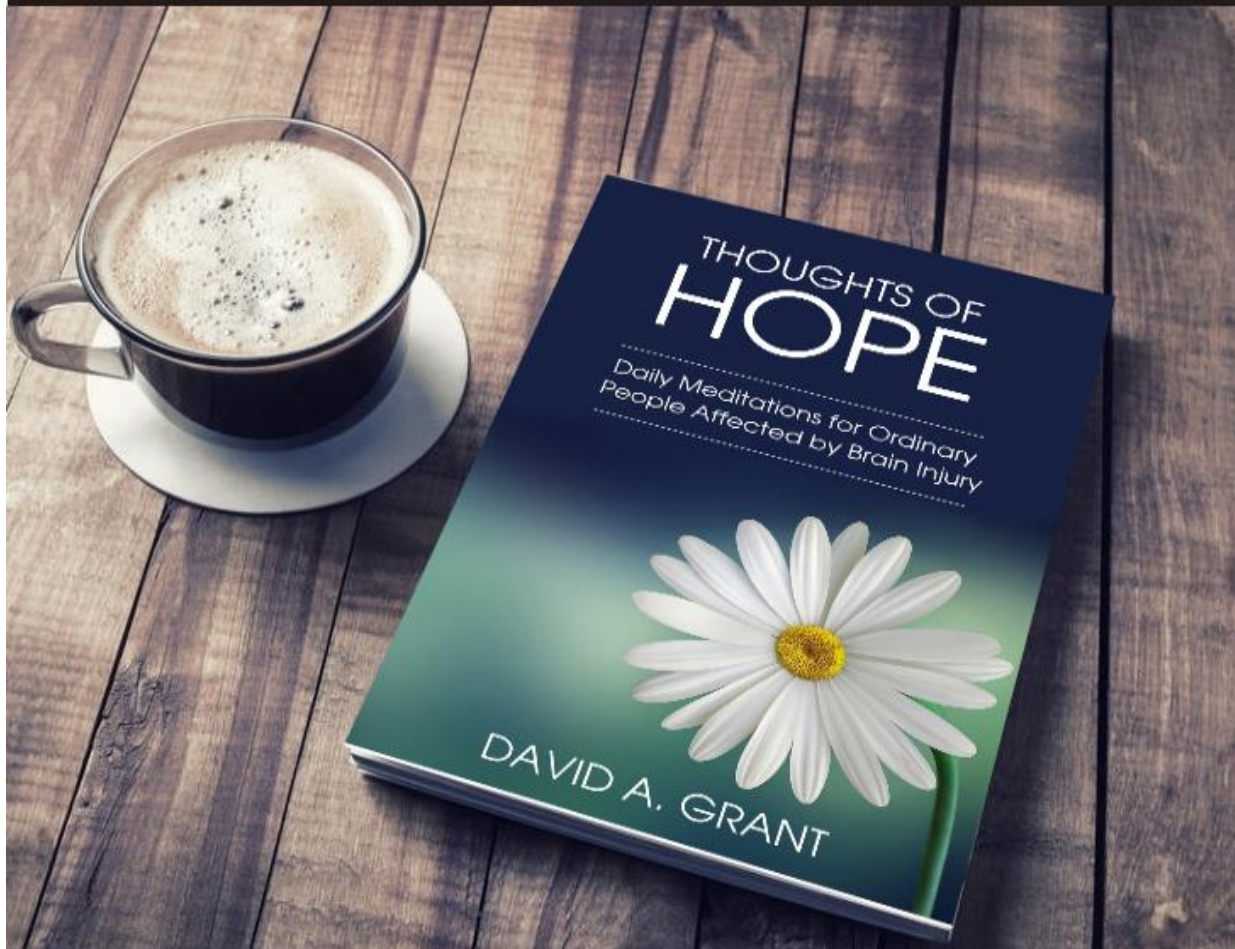
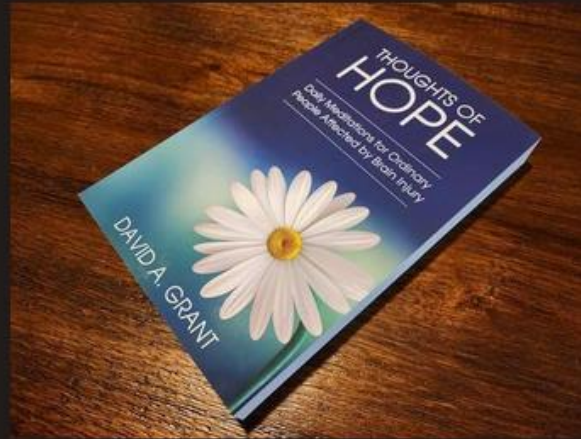
**Promise me you'll always remember: You're braver  
than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and  
smarter than you think. -A.A. Milne**

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# THOUGHTS OF HOPE

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# News & Views

By David & Sarah Grant



We are truly grateful for the continued support and written contributions from our dedicated readers, brain injury survivors, caregivers, family members, professionals, and members of the support community. With every quarterly issue, our aim is to advocate for those affected by brain injuries and provide valuable education to empower individuals on their journey to recovery.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our readers, whose unwavering support fuels our mission. Your feedback, engagement, and shared stories inspire us to continue delivering the impactful content you deserve. We are committed to ensuring that each issue of HOPE Magazine remains a valuable resource and a source of encouragement and inspiration for all.

To our incredible contributors, we express our heartfelt appreciation. Your willingness to share your personal experiences, knowledge, and expertise is what makes this publication so powerful. Your voices and insights shape the conversations around brain injury and contribute to a better understanding and support for everyone affected.



Together, let's continue to raise awareness, advocate for change, and foster a supportive environment for all those affected by brain injuries. Thank you for being a part of HOPE Magazine, and we look forward to sharing many more inspiring stories and informative articles in the future.

We wish you peace,

*David & Sarah*