

# Suburban Life

Lorraine McClellan editor/477-5450



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## Closed head injury

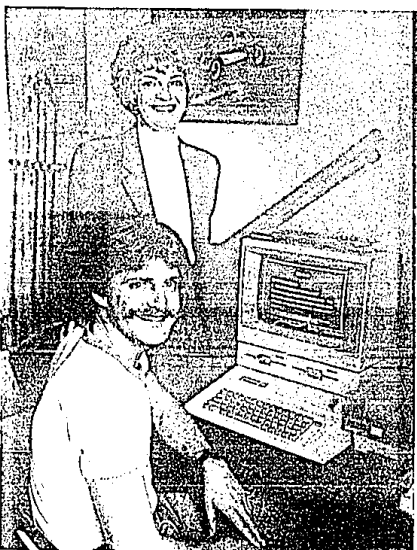
### Mother and son work together toward full-scale recovery

By Maureen Aitken  
special writer

JANE MILOSCH and her husband Mac stopped in Alabama for the evening of April 23, 1983, to rest before heading to Florida, where they expected to spend a warm, peaceful vacation. She was asleep at 4 a.m., trying to rest before the final drive to Florida, when the phone rang.

It was the couple's son Greg, 23, who called. He said that Steve, their 23-year-old son, was on his way from work at General Motors in Flint when his car crashed on south-bound I-75 at a sharp turn near the Clarkston exit. The bad news was that Steve was pronounced dead on arrival. The good news wasn't much better.

The doctor revived Steve, but the accident that had thrown him 200 feet now left him in a coma and in very critical condition at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital.



Jane Milosch is now making a career of rehabilitating closed head injury patients. Steve Milosch uses both a tape recorder and an Apple II computer to help compensate for his short-term memory.

That moment stays with her like a relentless nightmare, a nightmare that was followed by an endless ride to the hospital, where family members tried to brace her for the worst. "Mom, he really looks bad," her daughter said.

But no warning could have braced her for the sight of machines breathing for her son, and stitches about a foot long exposed from his shaven head.

"I remember seeing him and then two nurses on either side of me holding me up and taking me out of the room," she said. "And I remember that I cried. It was hard to believe that my son was fighting for his life." The doctors gave it to her straight. They weren't giving any hope.

STEVE, THE doctors told her and her husband, had received a massive blow to the head called a closed head injury. He had two blood clots and

his skull was fractured. In this case, they said, the fracture was a blessing that gave Steve's swollen brain the extra room it needed.

Steve would remain in that same bed in a coma for five and a half weeks. During that time Milosch's life changed drastically. She stopped going to her job and moved into the hospital. While other family members realized that normalcy was the best therapy, she refused to leave the waiting room, unless it was to see Steve.

Milosch describes that time as a clump of 10-minute visits between the hours of 10 a.m. and 8 p.m., three Code Blues and an intense amount of prayer. During this time she could not read or plan any sort of normal life. It all rested on Steve. All she could do was sit in the waiting room with her number one antagonist, the clock.

It's stressful to sit in a waiting room and all there is is a clock," she said. "And it doesn't move."

What Milosch couldn't comprehend at that time was that Steve had become another number in a national statistic. He was now one of 30,000 to 50,000 people who suffer brain damage injury and he was one of the 1,250 new traumatic head injury cases caused by motorcycle or car accidents.

Steve's closed head injury meant his wound did not penetrate through the skull and into the brain, but rather the damage was caused by the brain hitting against the skull.

Milosch would learn much of this later on, but now all she concentrated on was the emotion and the hope that Steve would soon regain consciousness. She said that the day Steve did come out of his coma was unlike any movie or soap opera could have depicted it. Instead of the comatose victim suddenly waking up and returning to normal, Steve only opened his eyes.

Much later, Steve's mouth gave a low, robot-like sound. The doctors told her about the process of recovery. It would be slow, very slow, and it would require much training, drive and patience. She wanted to know if Steve suffered brain damage.

"I KNOW NOW that it was a stupid question," she said. "His didn't talk, he still had a tube in his throat, he couldn't get out of bed. We had a 23-year-old, six foot two infant."

Steve went into physical, occupational and speech therapy while in the hospital. When he left, Steve made progress, but he was still in a wheelchair, still trying desperately to become whole again.

The family didn't have it easy either. Mother was being missed

around the house and the emotional strain was putting unneeded pressure on the family. Milosch said, for example, that it took much pain and communication to bring her out of her compulsive monitoring and caution towards Steve. She finally realized, however, that Steve had to be given the freedom to fail, if he was ever going to learn.

And learn he did. After almost three years, Steve was able to do just about anything he did before the accident, although he now has to work harder to do it. He is back at school at OCC in Auburn Hills and once again in charge of his own life.

But, there are deficits. The right side of his body is still weaker than his left, he has a heart condition, he has a vision problem, and he occasionally has problems with his memory. But he is driving again.

His mother says Steve still fights as hard as ever to return to how he was before the accident, and she is proud of his strength and determination through the whole ordeal.

Steve is not the only one who has grown because of the accident.

MILOSCH WENT back to work at a new job called Total Therapy Management.

She is a lecturer and volunteer, she understands that the draining experience she has gone through can be used to help others in the same position. Communication and understanding are some times all it takes, and all that can be done.

She first started to do public relations for Total Therapy Management, where 18 staff members help 25-30 brain injured clients in Oak Park and nine staff members teach 20-25 clients independent living and get them vocational placement.

The center offers physical and speech therapy, neuro psychiatry, TTM also teaches comprehensive restructuring in such skills as functional living, language, academics, physical fitness and nutrition. Often, workers are on a singular relationship with their clients.

The center also provides evening meetings for family and friends of the clients to discuss the needs of the brain injured individual, as well as his relatives and friends.

Milosch cannot say enough about the importance of such a facility. But there is more said in her actions than in her words. As she walks about and talks with clients, her acquired strength since the accident shows with her care toward the clients.

As she talks kindly to a man in a wheelchair, whose robotic voice probably sounded a lot like her son's once did, she hears him say, "I want to walk."



Weightlifting is part of everyday therapy for Steve Milosch who had to relearn how to walk, talk, eat and get dressed on his way back to recovery after a closed head injury. The Harrison High School graduate, totally paralyzed for four months, and then confined to a wheelchair, is now a full time student at Oakland Community College.

"You will walk someday," she said before by her, strengthened, probably, by her own convictions and inexhaustible belief.

Photos by Rick Smith

## Volunteer Week is April 20-27

Metropolitan Detroit will join with communities across the country in honoring area volunteers during National Volunteer Week, April 20-27. The Volunteer Network, a coalition of Detroit area volunteer groups, is coordinating the local activities. Debbie Tischler is chairman of the steering committee. The theme for the week is "Thanks Volunteers for Lending a Hand in Metropolitan Detroit." The motto is "Cheers for Volunteers."

A key activity will be the wearing of red, white and blue ribbons by Detroit area volunteers in recognition of their efforts. The Volunteer Network is expected to distribute more than 150,000 ribbons to volunteers through the 1,500 organizations participating in the ribbon wearing campaign.

Volunteer recognition is more than saying "thank you" to volunteers. Carefully planned recognition events also serve to call public attention to the contribution of community volunteers and encourage others to become involved in the community as volunteers.

Each year, 92 million Americans

volunteer their energy to help others. That amounts to \$84 billion in work hours given to hospitals, community centers, Scout troops, schools, neighbors and friends. Detroit has 1.7 million residents volunteer. There are about 1,600 human service organizations in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb Counties that involve volunteer assistance.

The Volunteer Network urges area residents to consider their own community volunteer activity and to renew their commitment during National Volunteer Week.

Monday, April 21 Detroit's National Volunteer Steering Committee and the Volunteer Network will kick-off National Volunteer Week in Metropolitan Detroit at the Volunteer Network's annual meeting. The event will begin at 8:30 a.m. in Landowne Restaurant at 201 Atwater, Detroit.

The annual meeting is meant to bring all the volunteers and community representatives together for an enthusiastic send off for a week long celebration. Everyone is invited to attend. The cost is \$7.50 per person. Call 851-7601 for reservations.

## Graphic artist takes 1st place spot

Graphic artist Nancy Hurd took the first-place award in Farmington Artists Club spring exhibit for her work called "Soaring," executed in prismatic pencil.

The Livonia resident, who is also known for her sculpture, is a teacher for Wayne County Intermediate School District. She has been a member of the club for five years and was a previous first-place winner in 1983.

Visitors to the exhibit this month will see Hurd's work, along with other winners and another 500 pieces on show and sale in the juried gallery, the open gallery and the budget gallery Thursday through Sunday, April 24-27, in Mercy Center.

Show hours are from 7-9 p.m. Thursday; from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday; and from noon to 5 p.m. Sunday.

Guests have been asked to enter the center through Gate 4 on 11 Mile Road, east of Middlebelt. Admission is free and refreshments are complimentary.

Judging for the show was completed late last month by James Gilbert who is manager for all exhibits and special events in Pontine Art Center.

One of Gilbert's duties as judge was to state in writing the reason he selected the winners he did, as well as the works that will be hung in the exhibit's prestigious juried gallery.

"Soaring," Gilbert said was chosen for "its idea, its concept and the final detailing behind it. It is a strong piece. I am impressed with the fact that it is almost a complete story within itself. A lot of thought went into the composition."



When visitors see "Soaring" in Farmington Artists Club's spring exhibit this month, they'll see it hung with a blue ribbon. The art-



ist is Nancy Hurd, a Livonia resident known as well for her sculpture as for her work in prismatic pencil.

## Kol Ami marks first adult bat mitzvah

Late in March Temple Kol Ami marked its first adult bat mitzvah service. Seven women, all of whom have children of their own in religious schools, had been preparing for more than a year to be called to worship and celebrate their coming of age in the Jewish religion.

The participants were Judith Gordon and Rene Lee, both of Farmington Hills; Lorraine Fenster, Leah

Green, Sharon Krause and Gail Rabin of West Bloomfield; and Elaine Hecker of Bloomfield Hills.

The service was particularly significant to congregants, as it also marked the 52nd anniversary of Rabbi Ernst Conrad's bar mitzvah in Berlin, Germany, and included the same Torah reading the rabbi did for his service.