

# THE OPEN ROAD

By Buster Rogers

© September, 2005

Before my stroke, I had no idea there was a time bomb ticking in my brain. It sat waiting to explode, waiting to change my world, change me in ways I couldn't imagine, much less guard against.

I was very lucky before my stroke. I rode a large, fast motorcycle. It was an extension of myself. It was the essence of my strength and independence.

One day at work, I stood up from a chair and felt disoriented. I called my doctor, who couldn't find anything wrong. I changed doctors. The new doctor couldn't find anything wrong. He sent me to a neurologist with the same results. I again felt disoriented. I called my son. We didn't know much, but we knew it was time to sell the bike.

Several days later, I awoke to go to work. Disorientation had developed into a full blown stroke I got out of bed and collapsed. I thrashed on the floor, screaming, hemorrhaging and unaware, my life was changing forever. My very alert wife screamed, "You're having a stroke!" She called 911 and an ambulance got me to the hospital. My wife saved my life.

Now, living a normal, simple life is a chore. It takes an unbelievable amount of time and effort. I must plan every move, often getting lost in the planning. I agonize. I am a prisoner in my own body.

Removal of the ability for rational thought and decision making causes chaos. So called "normal" people treat stroke survivors as if stupidity is a given. We have to demonstrate superiority in order to be treated JUST below average. We are perceived unable to make even simple decisions on our own.

Physical problems make it worse. I ask, "How to be a man? How to please my wife?" There are no easy answers.

After a while, I begin to imagine, "God hates me and is punishing me for imagined and unimagined transgressions." But then I realize, He doesn't hate me. Other times I quote Mel Gibson from the movie, Lethal Weapon, "If God hates me ...hate 'em back." It's all a cosmic craps game and the numbers are quite large.

Still, I have faith. Each day, I work as hard as I can, to heal and gain control of my body, all the while knowing it will never be the same, all the while facing the

ignorance of those who knew me before my stroke. They knew me as a master of broken bones and rapid recovery. They know nothing about me now.

Dear reader, listen to me! Returning to the world of pre-stroke is a slow, painful, endless journey. It can't be rushed. Maintaining a self assured mind is a big key. A bad attitude can slow the journey, or stop it altogether.

Nature has set you on this almost funny path. I say almost funny as if I really feel it's funny. But it's most unfunny when you shoulder the burden of remembered abilities - almost remembered, in some cases. They are so elusive they might not be anything except an almost forgotten legend shrouded in the mist of harsh fate and capricious gods.

This tale of mine is a love of mine using the language of my previous life. Stroke is a cruel mistress who withholds her favors at a most inopportune time. I strive desperately to make you aware of how frustrating, sudden, incomprehensible and destructive, the blinding fury can be. I thought I was in control of my destiny. Then the clock in my brain sounded. My universe changed forever.

I no longer have my bike...but, I have my wife, my son and inner recognition of a non-polished strength. All have given me an ability to take adventures and experience realities I never even considered before my stroke. I am very lucky.