

VSS

Volunteer Stroke Scheme

NEWS

Issue 1, Number 2

August, 1986

The First Edition

The first edition of VSS News, all 2,500 copies have been circulated to relevant agencies, both statutory and voluntary and to concerned people all over the country. It has been well received and we are now happy that at least every hospital and health board will be aware of our existence, because it is important that we should not only become known but that also we should become increasingly effective.

Already we have had enquiries from several areas about the possibility of setting up local 'Volunteer Stroke Schemes'. Obviously we are very happy to help in every way possible because there are not only people who suffer stroke but also the families of those people have a very real need for information and practical help. The VSS operates a scheme primarily through a supervisor who is responsible for the successful operation of the scheme, visiting the people who suffer stroke, recruiting volunteers and matching these, as well as setting up stroke clubs together with the necessary organisation.

To achieve these ends requires finance — we cannot cry 'inflation' and do nothing because our commitment is to effective growth for every part of Ireland. We have applied for grant aid to 'The Ireland Fund' and to 'The Department of Social Welfare' under their 'Grants for Voluntary Organisations' scheme — so far we have nothing to report.

GENEROUS GIFT

Recently we were delighted to receive a gift of £391.50 which was completely unexpected. The gift came from a young lady, Yvonne Smith, who while training for the Evening Press Ladies Marathon, discussed incentives with her sister Linda. Their father Bert, who had himself suffered stroke, was a member of the recently formed 'Stroke Club', so Linda immediately suggested the Volun-

teer Stroke Scheme. Yvonne not only completed the 10 kilometre Ladies Marathon in one hour and three minutes, but also got the sponsorship. We feel that the whole family was involved. To Yvonne, Linda, Bert and family, a very genuine 'thank you' from all of us in VSS.



Yvonne with her father, Bert.

MEMBERSHIP

We can report an ongoing growth in membership especially since our AGM in April and our first issue of VSS News and Brochure. The greater and more widespread the membership the easier it will become to establish schemes throughout the country, because we will know that we have the commitment of people who wish to see a genuine and positive help for those who suffer stroke, as well as their families. Confident that this commitment is forthcoming and realising how badly help is needed we have set our sights on establishing at least three active Volunteer Stroke Schemes possibly in Cork, Limerick and Longford before the end of 1986. The North and South Dublin Schemes continue to thrive.

OFFICE

The office is now manned five full days each week and callers, either by phone or personally will be familiar with the pleasant and positive response of Willie Roche. Willie suffered stroke himself some years ago and were it not for his 'total' commitment to VSS we would not be in the happy position of being 'open to the public'. He has generously and kindly offered his services, thus

ensuring that we could participate in one of the National Manpower Schemes. A young lady, Valerie Ralph, has joined us on a Work Experience Programme, thus ensuring that between Willie and herself there will be an efficient, friendly and competent service in operation at North Great Georges Street. We sincerely hope that this 'work experience' will be so invaluable for both of us that we shall be able to employ Valerie on a permanent basis in the future. We wish her every happiness with us, especially in these very early days of growth and development.

Ann Kavanagh, our extremely hard working secretary is in hospital. We wish her a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing her 'back in harness' in the near future with the promise that we will try and lighten the burden of her work. She has our prayers.

AGM

The second Annual General Meeting of the VSS took place on 30th April 1986 in the Burlington Hotel through kind courtesy of the Management. Among the very large attendance were representatives of all the pertinent professions, as well as delegates from the Eastern Health Board. We were especially glad to welcome Professor J. S. McCormick, one of our patrons. In reviewing the past year Dr. Davis Coakley was able to report achievement in so many spheres including the appointment of our second Supervisor, Deirdre King and the opening of our central office at 8 North Great George's Street, Dublin 1. The first edition of VSS News, the VSS poster and brochure were introduced at this successful AGM.

We are delighted that Dr. Coakley remains on as our Medical Adviser, showing his continuing commitment to VSS since its inception.

Frank Reynolds

A SMILE

A smile is something wonderful
That you can give away,
It makes life so much more meaningful
Gives someone pleasure every day.

A smile is very powerful
Yet so simple to express,
It can banish something awful
It conveys some happiness.

Give away what costs so little
Brighten up somebody's day,
For your face is not so brittle
Let it smile and have its say.



Thomond O'Brien

When as a child I laughed and wept, time crept.
When as a youth I dreamed and talked, time walked.
When I became a full grown man, time ran.
And later as I older grew, time flew.
Soon I shall find while travelling on, time gone.
Will Christ have saved my soul by then? Amen

From The Old Clock in Chester Cathedral



From:

The Chest Heart and Stroke Association
CHSA Volunteer Stroke Scheme,
Tavistock House,
North Tavistock Square,
London.

To:

Mr. John L'Estrange,
Volunteer Stroke Scheme

Dear Mr. L'Estrange,

Many thanks for sending me your splendidly produced magazine. Thanks too for the nice review of "A Time to Speak".

We should be absolutely delighted for you to use anything that comes out in "Look Forward".

Best Wishes.

Yours sincerely,
Valerie Eaton Griffith

33 Llewellyn Way,
Rathfarnham,
Dublin 16.
20.5.86

Dear Sir,

I was told by a friend, Sister Catherine Horan that things in the VSS are now moving. Could you please send me some literature and a membership form. I had a stroke 2 years 5 months ago. I have come on a lot since then but the worst thing is having no-one from 8.30 in the morning till tea-time (6.00 p.m.). I know I am not the only one but at times it seems like it.

I hope you will answer this note as I've had nothing but let-downs in people saying one thing and then I'm left.

Yours faithfully,
Maevie Craven (Mrs)

Immediate contact was made by 'phone and visiting has been arranged.

Ed.

Early Days of a Supervisor

by Deirdre King

Though I am far from being new to this old world, I am only a few months old to the Volunteer Stroke Scheme, Dublin South.

Perhaps it is a good idea to put my early thoughts, feelings and impressions on paper, before they get lost in the muddled filing system I keep in my head.

Without having had a stroke, I can very easily forget a name or have difficulty finding a word or indeed forget what the weather was like on a certain day. I have therefore found that those who have had strokes are very hard on themselves and expect perfection in these areas which only a small minority would have had before a stroke. Perhaps then, to listen to those around them saying Em, Eh, Ah and "Like you know" would help put things into perspective.

Though many people find the lack of language a big barrier, my first visit to a stroke person, who could only say Yes and No, and through a misunderstanding was alone when I called, was a lesson in the many other ways of communication available to us. I came away knowing that person's interests, wishes, day to day living, feelings on his present situation and the areas of his disablement which upset him most. Yet I have no formula for this except to say that it was a mixture of gestures, facial expressions, eye contact and a tenseness or relaxation in the person which I was not consciously aware of at the time. I had a most rewarding visit and felt I had made a new friend. Friendship — this is what the Volunteer Stroke Scheme is all about.

I had the mistaken idea that volunteers needed to attend a course — which I did — before going to visit. I want now to put the record straight for all those good people who would like to be with us as volunteers. Volunteer Stroke Scheme, based on the hand of friendship and neighbourliness, is kept alive by caring people of all ages, from all walks of life, to give help and encouragement to those who need it.

The Volunteer Stroke Scheme, the stroke persons and their families will welcome you with open arms. A special invitation is open to men, whether football or golf fanatics or neither, who have a little time to spare. Talks and lectures help us to know and understand strokes a little better and encourage us in our endeavours. No amount of courses, lectures or talks can make a good neighbour. The genuine wish to be involved is the most important factor.

There is tremendous backing and advice given

unstintingly by doctors, therapists, nurses and of course the VSS. Also, we have volunteers who have suffered from strokes themselves and are in various stages of recovery. These communicate from their own experience and earn my admiration and respect daily. I am compiling a list of people who would be prepared to act as drivers once a week, starting in the Autumn, when I plan to have a club in existence. The aims of the club will be to help people take the plunge into the outside world and socialize once more — a step which many find too difficult to contemplate.

Those who have had a stroke and their families, who were suddenly dropped in at the deep end, show unbelievable courage and determination in the midst of bewilderment and frustration. So many ask, Why me? Why us? There is no answer to that question! Will-power, acceptance and determination to change direction are needed. It is up to us to top up that willpower and to give support and go hand in hand with the family and brighten part of their way.

Life and Living



A stranger came and took me by the hand,
He said "Please don't be afraid, you'll understand",
For there's more to life than seeing,
So much more with far more meaning,
And often you don't seem to understand.

Do you see the man with white cane in his hand?
His car, it lost control going round a bend.
But he thanks God that he is living,
In fact, his life is one of giving.
Yes, he's learnt, he truly understands.

Over there, that happy lady in the park,
She's deaf, you know, she cannot hear the lark.
Yet, she brings joy and life to many
Who need so much, not merely money,
Yes, she's wise, she truly understands.

The man down there who's sitting by the stream,
His young wife and only baby died last year.
Despite heartbreak, pain and sorrow,
He still lives and works and harrows,
He turns to God, he truly understands.

So when bad times come as come they do in life,
Don't let bitterness turn living into strife,
Count your blessings, use your vision
Be constructive, fill your mission,
Turn to God, you'll truly understand.

Thomond O'Brien.

IS EACH STROKE DIFFERENT

Prompted by John L'Estrange's account of his stroke in the first issue of the VSS News I undertook to give an account of my experience of a cerebro vascular accident (CVA) which I understand is a stroke. In doing this my purpose is not to seek sympathy or consolation for I am convinced that my personality has changed since the 16th January 1983 when I had a stroke. Like John L'Estrange, I know now that I am lucky although I also walk with a stick and can only awkwardly use my left hand. My hemiplegia (paralysis) is on my left side. Thus my thought processes, reading, and speech were not noticeably affected by the stroke.

HOW AND WHY

In October 1982 I had returned to Dublin after two years secondment in the West Indies. This had been my third secondment overseas over a period of 9 years and at 61 years of age was to be a preparation for retirement after 36 years service with the same Company. These secondments necessitated separation from my wife and six children. Since the ten year period, 1973-1983, was vitally important to my children's education my wife and family remained in Ireland.

On each of these occasions I had enjoyed good health. Indeed I can never remember being absent for one day from work when I was overseas despite the health hazards associated with Tropical Regions. As on previous occasions I visited the local doctor for a check-up as soon as I arrived home. This time I felt a numbness (coldness) in my left side otherwise I was fine. This was diagnosed as 'Old Age Arthritis' (I was now 61 years of age). My blood pressure could not have been more normal. After Christmas 1982 I appeared to be throwing my left foot as I walked. The Company Medical Officer, to whom I will be ever grateful, recommended that I see a neurologist, but the earliest appointment I could get was late January 1983.

A TERMINATED HOLIDAY

Inevitably on completion of an overseas assignment my wife Joan and I went away together on a holiday. The booking to Grand Canaria had already been made for January 9th, 1983 with 12 friends and relations (all husbands and wives). On arrival at Las Palmas Airport, Joan noticed my bad walking and a relative helped us with our baggage. All

by BRENDAN MURPHY

my adult life I had been very fond of walking and dancing and, despite my reluctance to walk, I did dance and enjoy myself with my wife and this group of wonderful people for the first week of our holiday. On Sunday morning of the second week I found I could not rise in the bed to get up for Mass. I was struck down. Joan, who must have been as shocked as I was, somehow dressed me and called her brother Ronald. Everything from here on was a frantic rush. A doctor was called and diagnosed a stroke. The next problem was to get home fast and working for Aer Lingus certainly helped. I was able to 'phone 'Operations Control' at Dublin and was advised that a Boeing 747 on Charter to a Dublin Travel Agency was returning to Dublin from Las Palmas that evening. Next job was to get to the Airport, contact the Handling Agent and get on board the aircraft. Here Joan's brother Ronald and his wife Maura who had been with us from the start got things moving and we were on our way to Dublin. I was able to walk onto the aircraft and I attribute this to our endeavouring to get to Mass on that traumatic morning. On arrival at Dublin we were met by our family - also shocked by the news - good old Ronald had phoned my family to tell them the bad news. They in turn had contacted their cousins who were staff nurses in Jervis Street Hospital.

I was now pushed by my son Ciaran in a wheelchair and driven fast to Jervis Street Hospital Casualty Section, which had been forewarned of my condition and imminent arrival.

HOSPITAL

Although I walked from my son's car into the hospital to which I was immediately admitted, I could not move next morning. I was particularly fortunate in having a Physician who had been the victim of a stroke some years earlier. His knowledgeable and wise approach to my problem together with the medical care of the dedicated hospital staff and particularly the daily visits of my wife and family, all helped my recovery. In four weeks I was sufficiently recovered to return home. I could now do most things for myself such as walking up stairs, washing, shaving, and dressing.

Buttons and shoe laces did present problems but I managed. I could not drive the car so my wife

and family drove me everywhere. I had physiotherapy twice a week at Jervis Street Hospital. Most patients know the difficulties of parking a car in that area of the city but I had a most patient and devoted wife who not alone drove me but suffered my frustration, impatience and depression. Luckily I did not have fits of crying but I did have a lot of self pity particularly when I saw my wife Joan doing the manual tasks which had always been my responsibility in the home. This still frustrates and depresses me despite the fact that there is nothing I can do about it. It was in these respects that my personality changed. From being happy and outgoing I became introverted. Worse still, I began to take my frustrations out on the family by blaming them for not conforming to my views on what they should and should not do in the home. I am deeply ashamed of this phase of my illness and hope that, with my retirement, I can change and make restitution for this most unhappy period in their lives and mine.



Brendan at his retirement party with wife Joan.

TO WORK OR NOT TO WORK

While recuperating at home after hospitalisation the question arose as to whether I should take early retirement or continue in my job of writing manuals and lecturing to students from foreign airlines. I had grave misgivings about the latter as I could not now be as articulate in the presentation of my lectures although I loved this part of my work. At this time my Company were offering quite generous terms for early retirement and it did not take a mathematician to calculate that, in money terms, I would be far better off if I accepted early retirement in March 1983. In this respect my mind could only assimilate the money side of the decision. For 31 years I had been the Bread Winner in the home.

Five of our children were either married or working and were able to fully support themselves. The youngest was 15 years of age and had to be supported and educated but I still saw myself as the head and main support of the whole family.

On the other hand my Doctor and friends kept telling me that I had spent the greater part of my life working and should retire gracefully. My wife and family held the view that I should return to work as a form of rehabilitation despite the loss of money, which was considerable. I went back to work on the 11th March 1983 – two months after the most traumatic experience of my life. Fortunately, I worked for one of the best and most considerate employers in the country. From both management and my colleagues I got every encouragement to recover the ability to do my job reasonably well, although never to my own satisfaction, as I was ever conscious of my reduced mobility and articulateness in the classroom among foreign students. They were most respectful and considerate towards me and assisted me more than most others in recovering some of my self confidence to the extent that, even though retired, I still return periodically to give the odd lecture to my respected students because of my love for teaching and as a form of occupational therapy. I can never adequately thank my wife for influencing my return to work – this was the best decision I ever made.

THE VOLUNTEER STROKE SCHEME

In September 1983 my wife who is very involved in the Whitehall Social Centre saw an announcement that a Valerie Eaton Griffith was speaking at a seminar in St. Patrick's College under the aegis of the National Social Service Board. Here I was most fortunate in meeting Frank Reynolds now chairman of the VSS, Willie Roche now a committee member, Erica O'Mara now a supervisor, and many others. I immediately saw the VSS as an organisation through which I could come to terms with my physical incapacity and perhaps help others who were less fortunate than I was. I became a founder member of the VSS in Ireland and this year I am honoured to be its Vice-Chairman, an activity that I hope to carry out satisfactorily following my retirement.

MY INVALID CAR

At the VSS Seminar and at subsequent VSS meetings I had the good fortune to meet a most Christian and interesting man whom I would call "a bit of a Character". His name is Willie Roche. He had a stroke some years ago and despite his slight incapacity he is the happiest and most pleasant person I have ever had the pleasure to meet. It was Willie who encouraged me to take driving lessons and to buy a car. In fact he insisted upon it and told me how to go about it. With the tuition of that wonderful organisation "The Irish Wheelchair Association" I passed my driving test

continued on page 7

CRISS CROSS FISH PUZZLE

Fit the words below into the diagram.

MACKEREL has been written in to give you a start.



8 letters

MACKEREL
STURGEON

6 letters

SALMON
TURBOT

4 letters

HAKE
SOLE
LING
PIKE
CARP

7 letters

HERRING
DOLPHIN

5 letters

TENCH
TROUT
SHARK
PERCH

3 letters

DAB
RAY
EEL
GAR

NATURE CHASE-O-GRAPH

How many animals, birds, fishes and insects can you find?

There are 33 in all, 28 across and 5 down.

L W O L F I N C H S
B A S S W A N C A T
E S P R A T T U N A
A P L I O N I D O G
R T R O U T G O A T
S O L E W R E N X O
A P E E L K R K I D
G U L L T I T E R N
S T O R K R A Y A K
T U R B O T F O W L

With thanks to Bill Howe

***** ANSWERS *****

*****	Wasp	Yak
*****	Down	Kid
*****	INSECT	Eik
*****	Fowl	Ape
*****	Owl	Goat
*****	Tern	Dog
*****	Ray	Lion
*****	Eel	Rat
*****	Gull	Cat
*****	Wren	Tiger
*****	Sole	Stag
*****	Trout	Ass
*****	Tuna	Donkey
*****	Sprat	Bear
*****	Finch	Wolf
*****	Across	Across
*****	Bass	Down
*****	Across	ANIMALS
*****	BIRDS	NATURE CHASE-O-GRAPH
*****	FISHES	7 Tench
*****		5 Ling
*****		3 Carp
*****		2 Herring
*****		DOWN
*****		8 Salmon
*****		6 Sturgeon
*****		4 Eel
*****		1 Perch
*****		ACROSS
*****		9 Gar
*****		10 Dab
*****		15 Mackerel
*****		16 Hake
*****		17 Turbot
*****		8 Shark
*****		11 Dolphin
*****		12 Ray
*****		13 Trout
*****		14 Sole



Thanks to "Look Forward" Autumn 1985.

IS EACH STROKE DIFFERENT

in July 1984 on the first attempt, an accomplishment which I thought was impossible. I had been driving for 45 years and had never had to undergo a test before. However Willie and Michael Saunders, my driving tutor, pushed me through and to both of them I will be forever grateful. In September 1984 I bought my car. It is a Nissan Sentra with automatic transmission and hand controls fitted. This really widened my horizon as I could now drive to work. For two years a very kind colleague had transported me to work. I was now mobile once more and could become involved in social work such as transporting those less fortunate than I am to the day activity centre in Coolock where about ten of us meet each Monday morning. With the encouragement of Ronald, whom I mentioned earlier and another brother-in-law Jack Hennigan, I have started to play 'pitch and putt' on a bad leg and with a dreadful club swing. Like my other activities it will probably improve with practice.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Telephone.....

Wish to apply for Full/Associate Membership (delete inapplicable) of the Volunteer Stroke Scheme and I enclose fee of

£.....
payable to Volunteer Stroke Scheme

Full Membership £10.00
Associate Membership £5.00

I am/am not willing to be involved in a V.S.S. branch in this area.

Signed.....

Date.....

Please remit to:

VOLUNTEER STROKE SCHEME
8 North Great Georges Street,
Dublin 1, Ireland.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

I still have not discovered the cause of my stroke. My earliest recollection is that during my last assignment in Trinidad I worried about things that never happened. I made one mistake, and in speculating upon the consequences of my error, my imagination blew them out of all proportion to the extent, that I lost confidence in my own ability. On one occasion when driving into Port of Spain my leg trembled on the clutch pedal. I stopped the car, exercised my leg and drove on. Before this I had noticed that on occasions I had some slight difficulty in accurately finding switches and controls with my left hand when driving. At the time they were not serious or important but, in retrospect they could have followed a series of small strokes. So although we are told that "all strokes are different" my reason for writing this article is that others may tell their experiences and through this exchange of knowledge we may find some common elements between strokes, and thus help ourselves and others to come to terms with these cerebro vascular accidents.

Finally it was with considerable trepidation that I faced retirement last March. However since my retirement I was elected secretary of our Retired Staff Association. Between this and my VSS activities I am wondering how I found time to attend work. For me a whole new life has begun at 65. I hope that all of those who have suffered a stroke are as lucky as I was and am. The way back is not easy but family, colleagues, friends, relations and the VSS will enable one to come to terms with a changed personality and incapacity. After all "a burden shared is a burden carried."

In conclusion I can never thank my brother Ray adequately for his encouragement and help in accelerating my recovery and return to active life particularly during my months of deep depression and remorse for my sins of commission and omission.

OFFICERS FOR 1986/87

Chairman:	Frank Reynolds
Vice-Chairman:	Brendan Murphy
Secretary:	Ann Kavanagh
Membership Secretary:	Willie Roche
Treasurer:	Margaret Dolan
Medical Adviser:	Dr. Davis Coakley

The next edition of VSS NEWS will be issued on 1st December, 1986.

VSS NEWS is distributed to all Hospitals and Health Boards throughout the country free of charge. Organisations requiring copies of VSS NEWS please contact the Editor at:

8 North Great Georges Street, Dublin 1.