

*A
Different
Kind of
Wisdom.*

*Heidi Kelley &
Ken Betsalel*

A Stroke Survivor's Tale in Words and Pictures



As an anthropologist, I was used to observing, not being observed. As a teacher, I was used to explaining, not being the object of explanation. On August 29, 1998, I experienced a massive stroke, leaving my right side paralyzed and leaving me totally aphasic, utterly speechless. Since then, I have had to fashion “a whole new life.” I was a cultural anthropologist and Director of International Programs at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. I made frequent trips to Galicia, a region of Spain where I did my fieldwork. I traveled to England, France, and Ecuador, and to conferences all over the United States and England. All that has changed.

Now, I speak slowly and walk with a cane. When I am brimming over with ideas (or tired or angry), my motor planning suddenly gets short-circuited. But, there is a sense where my life did not change. I am still a cultural anthropologist. In fact, my anthropological training also accounts, along with my age, for my rapid progress. I view my stroke as another culture to which I need to adapt. Specifically, my training in medical and psychological anthropology lends me the ability to see my experiences abstractly and see with empathy what other people must be going through.

Our exhibit is about our long journey through my rehab, through my stroke. My husband, Ken Betsalel, who also teaches at UNCA, took the photographs. I view our exhibit as a chance to educate other people about stroke, rehab, courage,

**That the mind's fire may not fail.
The vowels of affliction, of unhealed
not to feel it, uttered,
transformed in utterance
to song.**

Not farewell, not farewell, but faring

— Denise Levertov,
epigraph to Naomi Shihab Nye's *Fuel*

love, and the need for community. Our exhibit, our story, is not about overcoming my stroke, or even coming to grips with my stroke. We titled our exhibit *Mind's Fire*, from Denise Levertov's poem *F*, because it is about the powers of the imagination. It's about educating others about stroke. It's about healing other stroke survivors and using the mind's fire to heal “vowels of affliction,” transforming them into song.

This photographic diary opens up with a picture of me taken in Paris six weeks before my stroke. The last photograph shows me attending a rally in support of the Americans with Disability Act in Washington, D.C., in October 2000. In between, the diary illustrates many of the different therapies I used, from the conventional to the more alternative. It shows me in a moment of despair—we wanted to demonstrate that stroke recovery isn't all smiles and sunshine. It shows me at home practicing my mouth exercises in a mirror and playing a word game with my stepson, Simon. Finally, it shows me back to work in my office, helping students, and in the classroom, teaching again.

I would like to thank my family, my friends, my therapists, and my husband, Ken Betsalel, for taking the photographs, for being such a loving person (at least, most of the time!), and for nagging me gently to write my story. This version of my story is only a beginning.

— Heidi Kelley

Thoms Community Care Foundation
and
The University of North Carolina at Asheville
present

Mind's Fire

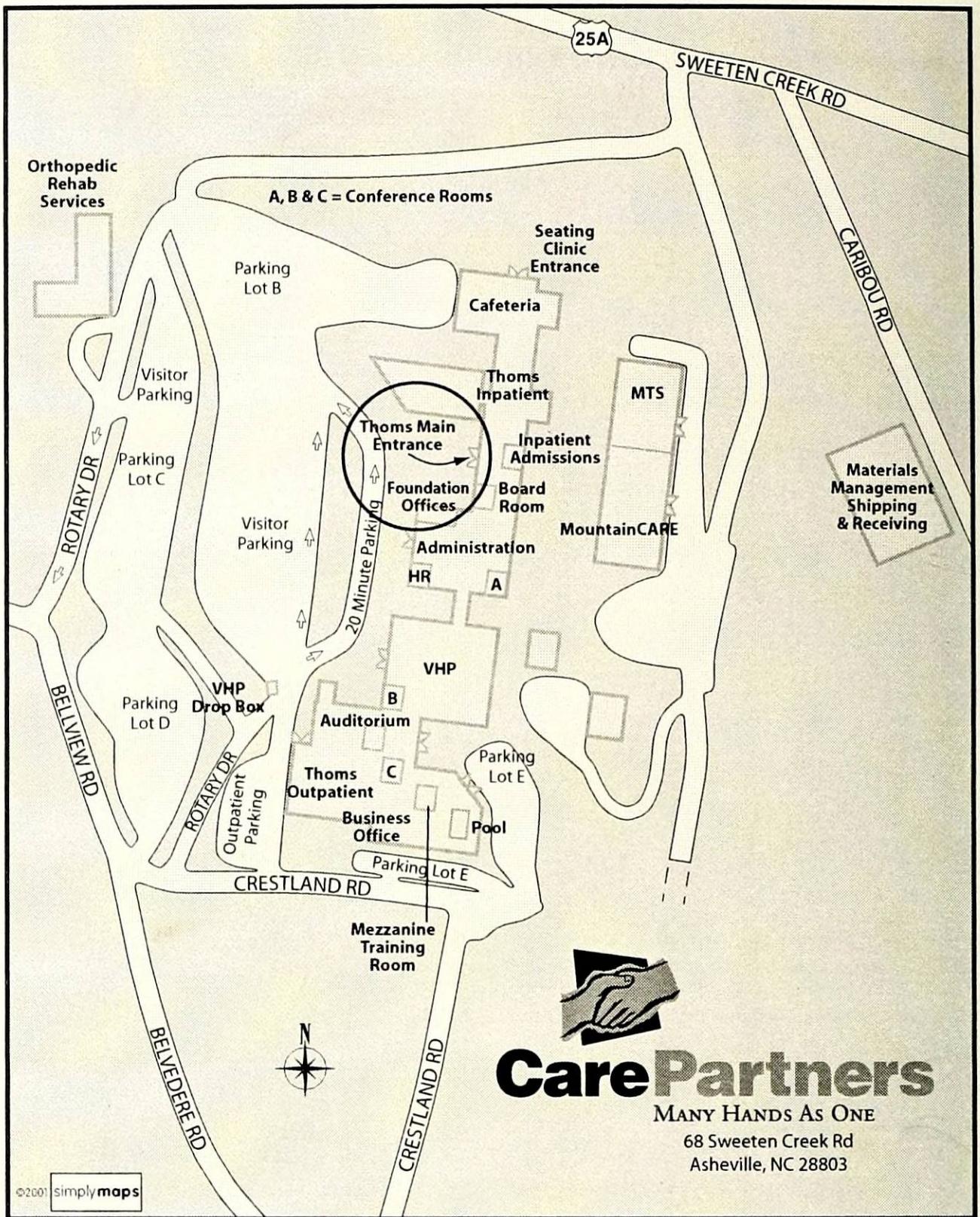
**Selections from a Photographic Diary
of Rehab and Recovery**



Private Opening Reception
Thursday, May 2, 2002 • 5:30–7:30 p.m.
Thoms Rehabilitation Hospital
68 Sweeten Creek Road • Asheville, North Carolina
(directions on reverse)

The favor of a reply by April 26 is requested
828/277-3392

Thanks to Mission St. Joseph's Neurosciences Institute for their support of this event



Thoms Rehabilitation Hospital is located at 68 Sweeten Creek Road, halfway between Biltmore Village and the Sweeten Creek/I-40 interchange at Exit 51. Upon entering the campus at the sign at 68 Sweeten Creek Road, take an immediate right, which will lead you to the parking lot in front of the hospital.

Enter the building at the Main Entrance, left of the gray stone Administration Building. Guests will be escorted from the lobby to the reception and exhibit area, adjacent to the downstairs physical therapy treatment gym.

Thoms Rehabilitation Hospital • 68 Sweeten Creek Road
For information: **828/274-2400**

Thoms Rehabilitation Hospital is a founding member of CarePartners.